# The Amazing Marriage

George Meredith

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BY

GEORGE MEREDITH

IN TWO VOLUMES

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# THE AMAZING MARRIAGE

## CHAPTER XXV

### THE PHILOSOPHER MAN OF ACTION

Gower's bedroom window looked over the shrubs of the square, and as his form of revolt from a city life was to be up and out with the sparrows in the early flutter of morning, for a stretch of the legs where grass was green and trees were not enclosed, he rarely saw a figure below when he stood dressing. Now there appeared a petticoated one stationary against the rails, with her face lifted. She fronted the house, and while he speculated abstractedly, recognition rushed on him. He was down and across the roadway at leaps.

'It 's Madge here!'

The girl panted for her voice.

'Mr. Woodseer, I 'm glad; I thought I should have to wait hours. She 's safe.'

'Where?'

'Will you come, sir'?'

'Step ahead.'

Madge set forth to north of the square.

He judged of the well-favoured girl that she could steer her way through cities: mouth and brows were a warning to challenger pirate craft of a vessel carrying

guns; and the red lips kept their firm line when they yielded to the pressure for speech.

'It's a distance. She's quite safe, no harm; she's a prisoner; she's well fed; she's not ill-treated.'

'You're out?'

'That's as it happens. I'm lucky in seeing you early. He don't mean to hurt her; he won't be beaten. All she asks is ten minutes with him. If he would!—he won't. She didn't mean to do him offence t'other night in that place—you've heard. Kit Ines told me he was on duty there—going. She couldn't help speaking when she had eyes on her husband. She kisses the ground of his footsoles, you may say, let him be ever so unkind. She and I were crossing to the corner of Roper Street a rainy night, on way to Mile End, away down, to one of your father's families, Mother Davis and her sick daughter and the little ones, and close under the public-house Goat and Beard we were seized on and hustled into a covered carriage that was there, and they drove sharp. She's not one to scream. We weren't frightened. We both made the same guess. They drove us to the house she's locked in, and me, too, up till three o'clock this morning.'

'You've seen nobody, Madge?'

'He's fixed she's to leave London, Mr. Woodseer. I've seen Kit Ines. And she's to have one of the big houses to her use. I guessed Kit Ines was his broom. He defends it because he has his money to make—and be a dirty broom for a fortune! But any woman's sure of decent handling with Kit Ines—not to speak of lady. He and a mate guard the house. An old woman cooks.'

'He guards the house and he gave you a pass?'

'Not he. His pride's his obedience to his "paytron" —he calls his master, and won't hear that name abused. We are on the first floor; all the lower doors are locked day and night. New street, not much neighbours; she wouldn't cry out of the window. She's to be let free if she'll leave London.

'You jumped it!'

'If I'd broke a leg, Mr. Kit Ines would have had to go to his drams. It wasn't very high; and a flower-bed underneath. My mistress wanted to be the one. She has to be careful. She taught me how to jump down not to hurt. She makes you feel you can do anything. I had a bother to get her to let me and be quiet herself. She's not one to put it upon others, you'll learn. When I was down I felt like a stick in the ground and sat till I had my feet, she at the window waiting; and I started for you. She kissed her hand. I was to come to you, and then your father, you nowhere seen. I wasn't spoken to. I know empty London.'

'Kit Ines was left sleeping in the house?'

'Snoring, I dare say. He don't drink on duty.'

'He must be kept on duty.'

'Drink or that kind of duty, it's a poor choice.'

'You'll take him in charge, Madge.'

'I've got a mistress to look after.'

'You've warmed to her.'

'That's not new, Mr. Woodseer. I do trust you, and you his friend. But you are the minister's son, and any man not a great nobleman must have some heart for her. You'll learn. He kills her so because she's fond of him—loves him, however he strikes.

No, not like a dog, as men say of us. She'd die for him this night, need were. Live with her, you won't find many men match her for brave; and she's good. My Sally calls her a Bible saint. I could tell you stories of her goodness, short the time though she's been down our way. And better there for her than at that inn he left her at to pine and watch the Royal Sovereign come swing come smirk in sailor blue and star to meet the rain—would make anybody disrespect Royalty or else go mad! He's a great nobleman, he can't buy what she's ready to give; and if he thinks he breaks her will now, it's because she thinks she's obeying a higher than him, or no lord alive and Kit Ines to back him'd hold her. Women want a priest to speak to men certain times. I wish I dared; we have to bite our tongues. He's master now, but, as I believe God's above, if he plays her false, he's the one to be brought to shame. I talk.'

'Talk on, Madge,' said Gower, to whom the girl's short-syllabled run of the lips was a mountain rill compared with London park waters.

'You won't let him hurry her off where she'll eat her heart for never seeing him again? She prays to be near him, if she's not to see him.'

'She speaks in that way?'

'I get it by bits. I'm with her so, it's as good as if I was inside her. She can't obey when it goes the wrong way of her heart to him.'

'Love and wisdom won't pull together, and they part company for good at the church door,' said Gower. 'This matrimony's a bad business.'

Madge hummed a moan of assent. 'And my poor Sally'll have to marry. I can't leave my mistress while

she wants me, and Sally can't be alone. It seems we take a step and harm 's done, though it's the right step we take.'

'It seems to me you 've engaged yourself to follow Sally's lead, Madge.'

'Girls' minds turn corners, Mr. Woodseer.'

He passed the remark. What it was that girls' minds occasionally or habitually did, or whether they had minds to turn, or whether they took their whims for minds, were untroubled questions with a young man studying abstract and adoring surface nature too exclusively to be aware of the manifestation of her spirit in the flesh, as it is not revealed so much by men. However, she had a voice and a face that led him to be thoughtful over her devotedness to her mistress, after nearly losing her character for the prize-fighter, and he had to thank her for invigorating him. His disposition was to muse and fall slack, helpless to a friend. Here walked a creature exactly the contrary. He listened to the steps of the dissimilar pair on the detonating pavement, and eyed a church clock shining to the sun.

She was sure of the direction: 'Out Camden way, where the murder was.'

They walked at a brisk pace, conversing or not.

'Tired? You must be,' he said.

'Not when I 'm hot to do a thing.'

'There 's the word of the thoroughbred!'

'You don't tire, sir,' said she. 'Sally and I see you stalking out for the open country in the still of the morning. She thinks you look pale for want of food, and ought to have some one put a biscuit into your pocket overnight.'

'Who 'd have guessed I was under motherly observation!'

'You shouldn't go so long empty, if you listen to trainers.'

'Capital doctors, no doubt. But I get a fine appetite.'

'You may grind the edge too sharp.'

He was about to be astonished, and reflected that she had grounds for her sagacity. His next thought plunged him into contempt for Kit Ines, on account of the fellow's lapses to sottishness. But there would be no contempt of Kit Ines in a tussle with him. Nor could one funk the tussle and play cur, if Kit's engaged young woman were looking on. We get to our courage or the show of it by queer screws.

Contemplative over these matters, the philosopher transformed to man of action heard Madge say she read directions in London by churches, and presently exclaiming disdainfully, and yet relieved, 'Spooner Villas,' she turned down a row of small detached houses facing a brickfield, that had just contributed to the erection of them, and threatened the big city with further defacements.

Madge pointed to the marks of her jump, deep in flower-bed earth under an open window.

Gower measured the height with sensational shanks.

She smote at the door. Carinthia nodded from her window. Close upon that, Kit Ines came bounding to the parlour window; he spied and stared. Gower was known to him as the earl's paymaster; so he went to the passage and flung the door open, blocking the way.

'Any commands, your honour?'

'You bring the countess to my lord immediately,' said Gower.

Kit swallowed his mouthful of surprise in a second look at Madge and the ploughed garden-bed beneath the chamber window.

'Are the orders written, sir?'

'To me?—for me to deliver to you?—for you to do my lord's bidding? Where 's your head?'

Kit's finger-nails travelled up to it. Madge pushed past him.

She and her mistress, and Kit's mate, and the old woman receiving the word for a cup of tea, were soon in the passage. Kit's mate had a ready obedience for his pay, nothing else,—no counsel at all, not a suggestion to a head knocked to a pudding by Madge's jump and my lord's paymaster here upon the scene.

'My lady was to go down Wales way, sir.'

'That may be ordered after.'

'I 'm to take my lady to my lord?' and, 'Does it mean my lady wants a fly?' Kit asked, and harked back on whether Madge had seen my lord.

'At five in the morning?—don't sham donkey with me,' said Gower.

The business looked inclined to be leaky, but which the way for proving himself other than a donkey puzzled Kit: so much so, that a shove made him partly grateful. Madge's clever countermove had stunned his judgement. He was besides acting subordinate to his patron's paymaster; and by the luck of it, no voice of woman interposed. The countess and her maid stood by like a disinterested couple. Why be suspicious, if he was to keep the countess in sight? She was a nice lady, and he preferred her good opinion. She was

brave, and he did her homage. It might be, my lord had got himself round to the idea of thanking her for saving his nob that night, and his way was to send and have her up, to tell her he forgave her, after the style of lords. Gower pricked into him by saying aside: 'Mad, I suppose, in case of a noise?' And he could not answer quite manfully, lost his eyes and coloured. Neighbours might have required an explanation of shrieks, he confessed. Men have sometimes to do nasty work for their patrons.

They were afoot, walking at Carinthia's pace before half-past seven. She would not hear of any conveyance. She was cheerful, and, as it was pitiful to see, enjoyed her walk. Hearing of her brother's departure for the Austrian capital, she sparkled. Her snatches of speech were short flights out of the meditation possessing her. Gower noticed her easier English, that came home to the perpetual student he was. She made use of some of his father's words, and had assimilated them mentally besides appropriating them: the verbalizing of 'purpose,' then peculiar to his father, for example. She said, in reply to a hint from him: 'If my lord will allow me an interview, I purpose to be obedient.' No one could imagine of her that she spoke broken-spiritedly. Her obedience was to a higher than a mortal lord: and Gower was touched to the quick through the use of the word.

Contrasting her with Countess Livia and her cousin, the earl might think her inferior on the one small, square compartment called by them the world; but she carried the promise of growth, a character in expansion, and she had at least natural grace, a deer-like step. Although her picturesqueness did not swarm

on him with images illuminating night, subduing day, like the Countess Livia's, it was marked, it could tower and intermittently eclipse; and it was of the uplifting and healing kind by comparison, not a delicious balefulness.

The bigger houses, larger shops, austere streets of private residences, were observed by the recent inhabitant of Whitechapel.

'My lord lives in a square,' she said.

'We shall soon be there now,' he encouraged her, doubtful though the issue appeared.

'It is a summer morning for the Ortler, the Gross-Glockner, the Venediger,—all our Alps, Mr. Woodseer.'

'If we could fly!'

'We love them.'

'Why, then we beat a wing—yes.'

'For I have them when I want them to sight. It is the feet are so desirous. I feel them so this morning, after prisonership. I could not have been driven to my lord.'

'I know the feeling,' said Gower; 'any movement of us not our own impulse, hurries the body and deadens the mind. And by the way, my dear lady, I spoke of the earl's commands to this man behind us walking with your Madge. My father would accuse me of Jesuitry. Ines mentioned commands, and I took advantage of it.'

'I feared,' said Carinthia. 'I go for my chance.'

Gower had a thought of the smaller creature, greater by position, to whom she was going for her chance. He alluded to his experience of the earl's kindness in relation to himself, from a belief in his 'honesty';

dotted outlines of her husband's complex character, or unmixed and violently opposing elements.

She remarked: 'I will try and learn.'

The name of the street of beautiful shops woke a happy smile on her mouth. 'Father talked of it; my mother, too. He has it written down in his Book of Maxims. When I was a girl, I dreamed of one day walking up Bond Street.'

They stepped from the pavement and crossed the roadway for a side-street leading to the square. With the swift variation of her aspect at times, her tone changed.

'We are near. My lord will not be troubled by me. He has only to meet me. There has been misunderstanding. I have vexed him; I could not help it. I will go where he pleases after I have heard him give orders. He thinks me a frightful woman. I am peaceful.'

Gower muttered her word 'misunderstanding.' They were at the earl's house door. One tap at it, and the two applicants for admission would probably be shot as far away from Lord Fleetwood as when they were on the Styrian heights last autumn. He delivered the tap, amused by the idea. It was like a summons to a genie of doubtful service.

My lord was out riding in the park.

Only the footman appeared at that early hour, and his countenance was blank whitewash as he stood rigid against the wall for the lady to pass. Madge followed into the morning room; Ines remained in the hall, where he could have the opening speech with his patron, and where he soon had communication with the butler.

This official entered presently to Gower, presenting a loaded forehead. A note addressed to Mrs. Kirby-Levellier at the Countess Livia's house hard by was handed to him for instant despatch. He signified a deferential wish to speak.

'You can speak in the presence of the Countess of Fleetwood, Mr. Waytes,' Gower said.

Waytes checked a bend of his shoulders. He had not a word, and he turned to send the note. He was compelled to think that he saw a well-grown young woman in the Whitechapel Countess.

Gower's note reached Henrietta on her descent to the breakfast-table. She was alone, and thrown into a torture of perplexity: for she wanted advice as to the advice to be given to Janey, and Livia was an utterly unprofitable person to consult in the case. She thought of Lady Arpington, not many doors distant. Drinking one hasty cup of tea, she sent for her bonnet, and hastened away to the great lady, whom she found rising from breakfast with the marquis.

Lady Arpington read Gower's note. She unburdened herself: 'Oh! So it's no longer a bachelor's household!'

Henrietta heaved the biggest of sighs. 'I fear the poor dear may have made matters worse.'

To which Lady Arpington said: 'Worse or better, my child!' and shrugged; for the present situation strained to snapping.

She proposed to go forthwith, and give what support she could to the Countess of Fleetwood.

They descended the steps of the house to the garden and the Green Park's gravel walk up to Piccadilly. There they had view of Lord Fleetwood on horseback

leisurely turning out of the main way's tide. They saw him alight at the mews. As they entered the square, he was met some doors from the south corner by his good or evil genius, whose influence with him came next after the marriage in the amazement it caused, and was perhaps to be explained by it; for the wealthiest of young noblemen bestowing his name on an unknown girl, would be the one to make an absurd adventurer his intimate. Lord Fleetwood bent a listening head while Mr. Gower Woodseer, apparently a good genius for the moment, spoke at his ear.

How do we understand laughter at such a communication as he must be hearing from the man? Signs of a sharp laugh indicated either his cruel levity or that his presumptuous favourite trifled—and the man's talk could be droll, Lady Arpington knew: it had, she recollected angrily, diverted her, and softened her to tolerate the intruder into regions from which her class and her period excluded the lowly born, except at the dinner-tables of stale politics and tattered scandal. Nevertheless, Lord Fleetwood mounted to his house door, still listening. His 'Asmodeus,' on the tongue of the world, might be doing the part of Mentor really. The house door stood open.

Fleetwood said something to Gower; he swung round, beheld the ladies and advanced to them, saluting. 'My dear Lady Arpington! quite so, you arrive opportunely. When the enemy occupies the citadel, it 's proper to surrender. Say, I beg, she can have the house, if she prefers it. I will fall back on Esslemont. Arrangements for her convenience will be made. I thank you, by anticipation.'

His bow included Henrietta loosely. Lady Arping-

ton had exclaimed: 'Enemy, Fleetwood?' and Gower, in his ignorance of the smoothness of aristocratic manners, expected a remonstrance; but Fleetwood was allowed to go on, with his air of steely geniality and a decision, that his friend imagined he could have broken down like an old partition board under the kick of a sarcasm sharpening an appeal.

'Lord Fleetwood was on the point of going in,' he assured the great lady.

'Lord Fleetwood may regret his change of mind,' said she. 'The Countess of Fleetwood will have my advice to keep her footing in this house.'

She and Henrietta sat alone with Carinthia for an hour. Coming forth, Lady Arpington ejaculated to herself: 'Villainy somewhere!—You will do well, Henrietta, to take up your quarters with her a day or two. She can hold her position a month. Longer is past possibility.'

A shudder of the repulsion from men crept over the younger lady. But she was a warrior's daughter, and observed: 'My husband, her brother, will be back before the month ends.'

'No need for hostilities to lighten our darkness,' Lady Arpington rejoined. 'You know her? trust her?'

'One cannot doubt her face. She is my husband's sister. Yes, I do trust her. I nail my flag to her cause.'

The flag was crimson, as it appeared on her cheeks; and that intimated a further tale, though not of so dramatic an import as the cognizant short survey of Carinthia had been.

These young women, with the new complications

obtruded by them, irritated a benevolent great governing lady, who had married off her daughters and embraced her grandchildren, comfortably finishing that chapter; and beheld now the apparition of the sex's ancient tripping foe, when circumstances in themselves were quite enough to contend against on their behalf. It seemed to say, that nature's most burdened weaker must always be beaten. Despite Henrietta's advocacy and Carinthia's clear face, it raised a spectral form of a suspicion, the more effective by reason of the much required justification it fetched from the shades to plead apologies for Lord Fleetwood's erratic, if not mad, and in any case ugly, conduct. What otherwise could be his excuse? Such was his need of one, that the wife he crushed had to be proposed for sacrifice, in the mind of a lady tending strongly to side with her and condemn her husband.

Lady Arpington had counselled Carinthia to stay where she was, the Fates having brought her there. Henrietta was too generous to hesitate in her choice between her husband's sister and the earl. She removed from Livia's house to Lord Fleetwood's. My lord was at Esslemont two days; then established his quarters at Scrope's hotel, five minutes' walk from the wedded lady to whom the right to bear his title was granted, an interview with him refused. Such a squaring for the battle of spouses had never—or not in mighty London—been seen since that old fight began.

## CHAPTER XXVI

### AFTER SOME FENCING THE DAME PASSES OUR GUARD

Dame Gossip at this present pass bursts to give us a review of the social world siding for the earl or for his countess; and her parrot cry of 'John Rose Mackrell!' with her head's loose shake over the smack of her lap, to convey the contemporaneous tipsy relish of the rich good things he said on the subject of the contest, indicates the kind of intervention it would be.

To save the story from having its vein tied, we may accept the reminder, that he was the countess's voluble advocate at a period when her friends were shy to speak of her. After relating the Vauxhall Gardens episode in burlesque Homeric during the freshness of the scandal, Rose Mackrell's enthusiasm for the heroine of his humour set in. He tracked her to her parentage, which was new breath blown into the sunken tradition of some Old Buccaneer and his Countess Fanny: and, a turn of great good luck helping him to a copy of the book of the Maxims for Men, he would quote certain of the racier ones, passages of Captain John Peter Kirby's personal adventures in various lands and waters illustrating the text, to prove that the old warrior acted by the rule of his recommendations. They had the repulsive attraction proper to rusty lumber swords and truncheons that have tasted brains. They wove no mild sort of halo for the head of a shillelagh-flourishing Whitechapel Countess descended from the writer and doer.

People were willing to believe in her jump of thirty feet or more off a suburban house-top to escape durance, and her midnight storming of her lord's town house, and ousting of him to go find his quarters at Scrope's hotel. He, too, had his band of pugilists, as it was known; and he might have heightened a raging scandal. The nobleman forbore. A woman's blow gracefully taken adds a score of inches to our stature, floor us as it may: we win the world's after-thoughts. Rose Mackrell sketched the earl;—always alert, smart, quick to meet a combination and protect a dignity never obtruded, and in spite of himself the laugh of the town. His humour flickered wildly round the ridiculous position of a prominent young nobleman, whose bearing and character were foreign to a position of ridicule.

Nevertheless, the earl's figure continuing to be classic sculpture, it allied him with the aristocracy of martyrs, that burn and do not wince. He propitiated none, and as he could not but suffer shrewdly, he gained steem enough to shine through the woman's pitiless drenching of him. During his term at Scrope's hotel, the carousals there were quite old-century and matter of discourse. He had proved his return to sound sense in the dismissal of 'the fiddler,' notoriously the woman's lieutenant, or more; and nightly the revelry closed at the great gaming-tables of St. James's Street, while Whitechapel held the coroneted square, well on her way to the Law courts, as Abrane and Potts reported; and positively so, 'clear case.' That was the coming development and finale of the Marriage. London waited for it.

A rich man's easy smile over losses at play, merely

taught his emulous troop to feel themselves poor devils in the pocket. But Fleetwood's contempt of Sleep was a marvel, superhuman, and accused them of an inferior vigour, hard for young men to admit by the example. He never went to bed. Issuing from Fortune's hall-doors in the bright, lively, summer morning, he mounted horse and was away to the hills. Or he took the arm of a Roman Catholic nobleman, Lord Feltre, and walked with him from the green tables and the establishment's renowned dry still Sillery to matins at a Papist chapel. As it was not known that he had given his word to abjure his religion, the pious gamblers did no worse than spread an alarm and quiet it, by the citation of his character for having a try at everything.

Henrietta despatched at this period the following letter to Chillon:—

'I am with Livia to-morrow. Janey starts for Wales to-morrow morning, a voluntary exile. She pleaded to go back to that place where you had to leave her, promising she would not come Westward; but was persuaded. Lady Arpington approves. The situation was getting too terribly strained. We met and passed my lord in the park.

'He was walking his horse—elegant cavalier that he is: would not look on his wife. A woman pulled by her collar should be passive; if she pulls her way, she is treated as a dog. I see nothing else in the intention of poor Janey's last offence to him. There is an opposite counsel, and he can be eloquent, and he will be heard on her side. How could she manage the most wayward when she has not an idea of ordinary men!

But, my husband, they have our tie between them; it may move him. It subdues her—and nothing else would have done that. If she had been in England a year before the marriage, she would, I think, have understood better how to guide her steps and her tongue for his good pleasure. She learns daily, very quickly: observes, assimilates; she reads and has her comments—would have shot far ahead of your Riette, with my advantages.

'Your uncle—but he will bear any charge on his conscience as long as he can get the burden off his shoulders. Do not fret, my own! Reperuse the above —you will see we have grounds for hope.

'He should have looked down on her! No tears from her eyes, but her eyes *were* tears. She does not rank among beautiful women. She has her moments for outshining them—the loveliest of spectres! She caught at my heart. I cannot forget her face looking up for him to look down. A great painter would have reproduced it, a great poet have rendered the impression. Nothing short of the greatest. That is odd to say of one so simple as she. But when accidents call up her reserves, you see mountain heights where mists were—she is actually glorified. Her friend—I do believe a friend—the Mr. Woodseer you are to remember meeting somewhere—a sprained ankle—has a dozen similes ready for what she is when pain or happiness vivify her. Or, it may be, tender charity. She says, that if she feels for suffering people, it is because she is the child of Chillon's mother. In like manner Chillon is the son of Janey's father.

'Mr. Woodseer came every other evening. Our only enlivenment. Livia followed her policy, in refusing to

call. We lived luxuriously; no money, not enough for a box at the opera, though we yearned—you can imagine. Chapters of philosophy read out and expounded instead. Janey likes them. He sets lessons to her queer maid—reading, writing, pronunciation of English. An inferior language to Welsh, for poetical purposes, we are informed. So Janey determining to apply herself to Welsh, and a chameleon Riette dreading that she will be taking a contrary view of the honest souls—as she feels them to be—when again under Livia's shadow.

'The message from Janey to Scrope's hotel was despatched half-an-hour after we had driven in from the park; fruit of a brown meditation. I wrote it—third person—a single sentence. Arrangements are made for her to travel comfortably. It is funny—the shops for her purchases of clothes, necessaries, etc., are specified; she may order to any extent. Not a shilling of money for her poor purse. What can be the secret of that? He does nothing without an object. To me, uniformly civil, no irony, few compliments. Livia writes, that I am commended for keeping Janey company. What can be the secret of a man scrupulously just with one hand, and at the same time cruel with the other? Mr. Woodseer says, his wealth:—'More money than is required for their needs, men go into harness to Plutus,'—if that is clever.

'I have written my husband—as Janey ceases to call her own; and it was pretty and touching to hear her "my husband."—Oh! a dull letter. But he is my husband though he keeps absent—to be longed for—he is my husband still, my husband always. Chillon is Henrietta's husband, the world cries out, and when

she is flattered she does the like, for then it is not too presumptuous that she should name Henrietta Chillon's wife. In my ears, husband has the sweeter sound. It brings an angel from overhead. Will it bring him one-half hour sooner? My love! My dear! If it did, I should be lisping 'husband, husband, husband' from cock-crow to owl's cry. Livia thinks the world foolish, if not detestable. She and I have our different opinions. She is for luxury. I choose poverty and my husband. Poverty has its beauty, if my husband is the sun of it. *Elle radote.* She would not have written so dull a letter to her husband if she had been at the opera last night, or listened to a distant street-band. No more—the next line would be bleeding. He should have her blood too, if that were her husband's—it would never be; but if it were for his good in the smallest way. Chillon's wish is to give his blood for them he loves. Never did woman try more to write worthily to her absent lord and fall so miserably into the state of dripping babe from bath on nurse's knee. Cover me, my lord and love, my cause for—no, my excuse, my refuge from myself. We are one? Oh! we are one!—and we have been separated eight and twenty days.

'Henrietta Kirby-Levellier.'

That was a letter for the husband and lover to receive in a foreign land and be warmed.

The tidings of Carinthia washed him clean of the grimy district where his waxen sister had developed her stubborn insensibility;—resembling craziness, every perversion of the refinement demanded by young Englishmen of their ladies; and it pacified him with

the belief that she was now at rest, the disturbed history of their father and mother at rest as well; his conscience in relation to the marriage likewise at rest. Chillon had a wife. Her writing of the welcome to poverty stirred his knowledge of his wife's nature. Carinthia might bear it and harden to flint; Henrietta was a butterfly for the golden rays. His thoughts, all his energies, were bent on the making of money to supply her need for the pleasure she flew in—a butterfly's grub without it. Accurately so did the husband and lover read his wife, adoring her the more.

Her letter's embracing close was costly to them. It hurried him to the compromise of a debatable business, and he fell into the Austrian Government's terms for the payment of the inheritance from his father; calculating that—his sister's share deducted—money would be in hand to pay pressing debts and enable Henrietta to live unworried by cares until he should have squeezed debts, long due and increasing, out of the miserly old lord, his uncle. A prospect of supplies for twelve months, counting the hack and carriage Henrietta had always been used to, seemed about as far as it was required to look by the husband hastening homeward to his wife's call. Her letter was a call in the night. Besides, there were his yet untried Inventions. The new gunpowder testing at Croridge promised to provide Henrietta with many of the luxuries she could have had, and had abandoned for his sake. The new blasting powder and a destructive shell might build her the palace she deserved. His uncle was, no doubt, his partner. If, however, the profits were divided, sufficient wealth was assured. But his uncle remained a dubious

image. The husband and lover could enfold no positive prospect to suit his wife's tastes beyond the twelve months.

We have Dame Gossip upon us.

—One minute let mention be of the excitement over Protestant England when that rumour disseminated, telling of her wealthiest nobleman's visit to a monastery, up in the peaks and snows; and of his dwelling among the monks, and assisting in all their services day and night, hymning and chanting, uttering not one word for one whole week: his Papistical friend, Lord Feltre, with him, of course, after Jesuit arts had allured him to that place of torrents and lightnings and canticles and demon echoes, all as though expressly contrived for the horrifying of sinners into penitence and confession and the monkish cowl up to life's end, not to speak of the abjuration of worldly possessions and donation of them into the keeping of the shaven brothers; when either they would have settled a band of them here in our very midst, or they would have impoverished—is not too strong a word—the country by taking the money's worth of the mines, estates, mansions, freehold streets and squares of our metropolis out of it without scruple; rejoicing so to bleed the Protestant faith. Underrate it now—then it was a truly justifiable anxiety: insomuch that you heard people of station, eminent titled persons, asking, like the commonest low Radicals, whether it was prudent legislation to permit of the inheritance of such vast wealth by a young man, little more than a boy, and noted for freaks. And some declared it could not be allowed for foreign monks to have a claim to inherit English property. There was a general consent, that if the Earl of Fleetwood

went to the extreme of making over his property to those monks, he should be pronounced insane and incapable. Ultimately the world was a little pacified by hearing that a portion of it was entailed, Esslemont and the Welsh mines.

So it might be; but what if he had no child! The marriage amazing everybody scarcely promised fruit, it was thought. Countess Livia, much besought for her opinion, scouted the possibility. And Carinthia Jane was proclaimed by John Rose Mackrell (to his dying day the poor gentleman tried vainly to get the second syllable of his name accentuated) a young woman who would outlive twice over the husband she had. He said of his name, it was destined to pass him down a dead fish in the nose of posterity, and would affect his best jokes; which something has done, or the present generation has lost the sense of genuine humour.

Thanks to him, the talk of the Whitechapel Countess again sprang up, merrily as ever; and after her having become, as he said, 'a desiccated celebrity,' she outdid cabinet ministers and naughty wives for a living morsel in the world's mouth. She was denounced by the patriotic party as the cause of the earl's dalliance with Rome.

The earl, you are to know, was then coasting along the Mediterranean, on board his beautiful schooner yacht, with his Lord Feltre, bound to make an inspection of Syrian monasteries, and forget, if he could, the face of all faces, another's possession by the law.

Those two lords, shut up together in a yacht, were advised by their situation to be bosom friends, and they quarrelled violently, and were reconciled, and they quarrelled again; they were explosive chemicals;

until the touch of dry land relieved them of what they really fancied the spell of the Fiend. For their argumentative topic during confinement was Woman, when it was not Theology; and even off a yacht, those are subjects to kindle the utmost hatred of dissension, if men are not perfectly concordant. They agreed upon land to banish any talk of Women or Theology, where it would have been comparatively innocent; so they both desiring to be doing the thing they had sworn they would not do, the thoughts of both were fastened on one or the other interdicted subject. They hardly spoke; they perceived in their longing minds, that the imagined spell of the Fiend was indeed the bile of the sea, secreted thickly for want of exercise, and they both regretted the days and nights of their angry controversies; unfit pilgrims of the Holy Land, they owned.

To such effect, Lord Fleetwood wrote to Gower Woodseer, as though there had been no breach between them, from Jerusalem, expressing the wish to hear his cool wood-notes of the philosophy of Life, fresh drawn from Nature's breast; and urgent for an answer, to be addressed to his hotel at Southampton, that he might be greeted on his return home first by his 'friend Gower.'

He wrote in the month of January. His arrival at Southampton was on the thirteenth day of March; and there he opened a letter some weeks old, the bearer of news which ought by rights to make husbands proudly happy.

## CHAPTER XXVII

### WE DESCEND INTO A STEAMER'S ENGINE-ROOM

Fleetwood had dropped his friend Lord Feltre at Ancona; his good fortune was to be alone when the clang of bells rang through his head in the reading of Gower's lines. Other letters were opened: from the Countess Livia, from Lady Arpington, from Captain Kirby-Levellier. There was one from his lawyers, informing him of their receipt of a communication dated South Wales, December 11th, and signed Owain Wythan; to the effect, that the birth of a son to the Earl of Fleetwood was registered on the day of the date, with a copy of the document forwarded.

Livia scornfully stated the tattling world's 'latest.' The captain was as brief, in ordinary words, whose quick run to the stop could be taken for a challenge of the eye. It stamped the adversary's frown on Fleetwood reading. Lady Arpington was more politic; she wrote of 'a healthy boy,' and 'the healthy mother giving him breast,' this being 'the way for the rearing of strong men.' She condescended to the particulars, that she might touch him.

The earl had not been so reared: his mother was not the healthy mother. One of his multitudinous, shifty, but ineradicable ambitions was to exhibit an excellingly vigorous, tireless constitution. He remembered the needed refreshment of the sea-breezes aboard his yacht during the week following the sleep-discarded nights at Scrope's and the green tables. For a week he hung to the smell of brine, in rapturous amity

with Feltre, until they yellowed, differed, wrangled, hated.

A powerful leaven was put into him by the tidings out of Wales. Gower, good fellow, had gone down to see the young mother three weeks after the birth of her child. She was already renewing her bloom. She had produced the boy in the world's early manner, lightly, without any of the tragic modern hovering over death to give the life. Gower compared it to a 'flush of the vernal orchard after a day's drink of sunlight.' That was well: that was how it should be. One loathes the idea of tortured women.

The good fellow was perhaps absurdly poetical. Still we must have poetry to hallow this and other forms of energy: or say, if you like, the right view of them impels to poetry. Otherwise we are in the breeding yards, among the litters and the farrows. It is a question of looking down or looking up. If we are poor creatures—as we are if we do but feast and gamble and beget—we shall run for a time with the dogs and come to the finish of swine. Better say, life is holy! Why, then have we to thank her who teaches it.

He gazed at the string of visions of the woman naming him husband, making him a father: the imagined Carinthia—beautiful Gorgon, haggard Venus; the Carinthia of the precipice tree-shoot; Carinthia of the ducal dancing-hall; and she at the altar-rails; she on the coach box; she alternately softest of brides, doughtiest of Amazons. A mate for the caress, an electrical heroine, fronted him.

Yes, and she was Lord Fleetwood's wife, cracking sconces,—a demoiselle Moll Flanders,—the world's Whitechapel Countess out for an airing, infernally

earnest about it, madly ludicrous; the schemer to catch his word, the petticoated Shylock to bind him to the letter of it; now persecuting, haunting him, now immovable for obstinacy; malignant to stay down in those vile slums and direct tons of sooty waters on his head from its mains in the sight of London, causing the least histrionic of men to behave as an actor. He beheld her a skull with a lamp behind the eyeholes.

But this woman was the woman who made him a father; she was the mother of the heir of the House; and the boy she clasped and suckled as her boy was his boy. They met inseparably in that new life.

Truly, there could not be a woman of flesh so near to a likeness with the beatific image of Feltre's worshipped Madonna!

The thought sparkled and darkened in Fleetwood's mind, as a star passing into cloud. For an uproarious world claimed the woman, jeered at all allied with her; at her husband most, of course:—the punctilious noodle! the golden jackass, tethered and goaded! He had choice among the pick of women: the daughter of the Old Buccaneer was preferred by the wiseacre Cœlebs. She tricked him cunningly and struck a tremendous return blow in producing her male infant.

By the way, was she actually born in wedlock? Lord Levellier's assurances regarding her origin were, by the calculation, a miser's shuffles to clinch his bargain. Assuming the representative of holy motherhood to be a woman of illegitimate birth, the history of the House to which the spotted woman gave an heir would suffer a jolt when touching on her. And altogether the history fumed rank vapours. Imagine her boy in his father's name a young collegian! No commonly sensitive lad

could bear the gibes of the fellows raking at antecedents: Fleetwood would be the name to start roars. Smarting for his name, the earl chafed at the boy's mother. Her production of a man-child was the further and grosser offence.

The world sat on him. His confession to some degree of weakness, even to folly, stung his pride of individuality so that he had to soothe the pain by tearing himself from a thought of his folly's partner, shutting himself up and away from her. Then there was a cessation of annoyance, flatteringly agreeable: which can come to us only of our having done the right thing, young men will think. He felt at once warmly with the world, enjoyed the world's kind shelter, and in return for its eulogy of his unprecedented attachment to the pledge of his word, admitted an understanding of its laughter at the burlesque edition of a noble lady in the person of the Whitechapel Countess. The world sat on him heavily.

He recurred to Gower Woodseer's letter.

The pictures and images in it were not the principal matter,—the impression had been deep. A plain transcription of the young mother's acts and words did more to portray her: the reader could supply reflections.

Would her boy's father be very pleased to see him? she had asked.

And she spoke of a fear that the father would try to take her boy from her.

'Never that—you have my word!' Fleetwood said; and he nodded consentingly over her next remark: 'Not while I live, till he must go to school!'

The stubborn wife would be the last of women to sit and weep as a rifled mother.

A child of the Countess Carinthia (he phrased it) would not be deficient in will, nor would the youngster lack bravery.

For his part, comparison rushing at him and searching him, he owned that he leaned on pride. To think that he did, became a theme for pride. The mother had the primitive virtues, the father the developed: he was the richer mine. And besides, he was he, the unriddled, complex, individual he; she was the plain barbarian survival, good for giving her offspring bone, muscle, stout heart.

Shape the hypothesis of a fairer woman the mother of the heir to the earldom.

Henrietta was analyzed in a glimpse. Courage, animal healthfulness, she, too, might—her husband not obstructing—transmit; and good looks, eyes of the sapphire Ægean. And therewith such pliability as the Mother of Love requires of her servants.

Could that woman resist seductions?

Fleetwood's wrath with her for refusing him and inducing him in spite to pledge his word elsewhere, haphazard, pricked a curiosity to know whether the woman could be—and easily! easily! he wagered—led to make her conduct warrant for his contempt of her. Led,—that is, misled, you might say, if you were pleading for a doll. But it was necessary to bait the pleasures for the woman, in order to have full view of the precious fine fate one has escaped. Also to get well rid of a sort of hectic in the blood, which the woman's beauty has cast on that reflecting tide: a fever-sign, where the fever has become quite emotionless and is merely desirous for the stain of it to be washed out. As this is not the desire to possess or

even to taste, contempt will do it. When we know that the weaver of the fascinations is purchasable, we toss her to the market where men buy; and we walk released from vile subjection to one of the female heap:—subjection no longer, doubtless, and yet a stain of the past flush, often colouring our reveries, creating active phantasms of a passion absolutely extinct, if it ever was the veritable passion.

The plot—formless plot—to get release by the sacrifice or at least a crucial temptation of the woman, that should wash his blood clean of her image, had a shade of the devilish, he acknowledged; and the apology offered no improvement of its aspect. She might come out of the trial triumphant. And benefit for himself, even a small privilege, even the pressure of her hand, he not only shrank from the thought of winning,—he loathed the thought. He was too delicate over the idea of the married woman whom he fancied he loved in her maidenhood. Others might press her hand, lead her the dance: he simply wanted his release. She had set him on fire; he conceived a method for trampling the remaining sparks and erasing stain and scars; that was all. Henrietta rejected her wealthy suitor: she might some day hence be seen crawling abjectly to wealth, glad of a drink from the cup it holds, intoxicated with the draught. An injured pride could animate his wealth to crave solace of such a spectacle.

Devilish, if you like. He had expiated the wickedness in Cistercian seclusion. His wife now drove him to sin again.

She had given him a son. That fluted of home and honourable life. She had her charm, known to him alone.

But how, supposing she did not rub him to bristle with fresh irritations, how go to his wife while Henrietta held her throne? Consideration was due to her until she stumbled. Enough if she wavered. Almost enough if she stood firm as a statue in the winds, and proved that the first page of her was a false introduction. The surprising apparition of a beautiful woman with character; a lightly-thrilled, pleasure-loving woman devoted to her husband or protected by her rightful self-esteem, would loosen him creditably. It had to be witnessed, for faith in it. He reverenced our legendary good women, and he bowed to noble deeds; and he ascribed the former to poetical creativeness, the latter operated as a scourging of his flesh to yield its demoniacal inmates. Nothing of the kind was doing at present.

Or stay: a studious re-perusal of Gower Woodseer's letter enriched a little incident. Fleetwood gave his wife her name of Carinthia when he had read deliberately and caught the scene.

Mrs. Wythan down in Wales related it to Gower. Carinthia and Madge, trudging over the treeless hills, came on a birchen clump round a deep hollow or gully-pit; precipitous, the earl knew, he had peeped over the edge in his infant days. There at the bottom, in a foot or so of water, they espied a lamb; and they rescued the poor beastie by going down to it, one or both. It must have been the mountain-footed one. A man would hesitate, spying below. Fleetwood wondered how she had managed to climb up, and carrying the lamb! Down pitches Madge Winch to help—they did it between them. We who stand aloof admire stupidly. To defend himself from admiring, he con-

demned the two women for the risk they ran to save a probably broken-legged little beast: and he escaped the melting mood by forcing a sneer at the sort of stuff out of which popular ballads are woven. Carinthia was accused of letting her adventurous impulses and sentimental female compassion swamp thought of a mother's duties. If both those women had broken their legs the child might have cried itself into fits for the mother, there she would have remained.

Gower wrote in a language transparent of the act, addressed to a reader whose memory was to be impregnated. His reader would have flown away from the simple occurrence on arabesques and modulated tones; and then envisaging them critically, would have tossed his poor little story to the winds, as a small thing magnified: with an object, being the next thought about it. He knew his Fleetwood so far.

His letter concluded: 'I am in a small Surrey village over a baker's shop, rent eight shillings per week, a dame's infant school opposite my window, miles of firwood, heath, and bracken openings, for the winged or the nested fancies. Love Nature, she makes you a lord of her boundless, off any ten square feet of common earth. I go through my illusions and come always back on that good truth. It says, beware of the world's passion for flavours and spices. Much tasted, they turn and bite the biter. My exemplars are the lately breeched youngsters with two pence in their pockets for the gingerbread-nut booth on a fair day. I learn more from one of them than you can from the whole cavalcade of your attendant Ixionides.'

Mounting the box of his coach for the drive to

London, Fleetwood had the new name for the parasitic and sham vital troop at his ears.

'My Ixionides!' he repeated, and did not scorn them so much as he rejoiced to be enlightened by the title. He craved the presence of the magician who dropped illumination with a single word; wholesomer to think of than the whole body of those Ixionides:—not bad fellows, here and there, he reflected, tolerantly, half laughing at some of their clownish fun. Gower Woodseer and he had not quarrelled? No, they had merely parted at one of the crossways. The plebeian could teach that son of the genuflexions, Lord Feltre, a lesson in manners. Woodseer was the better comrade and director of routes. Into the forest, up on the heights; and free, not locked; and not parroting day and night, but quick for all that the world has learnt and can tell, though two-thirds of it be composed of Ixionides: that way lies wisdom, and his index was cut that way.

Arrived in town, he ran over the headings of his letters, in no degree anxious for a communication from Wales. There was none. Why none?

She might as well have scrawled her announcement of an event pleasing to her, and, by the calculation, important to him, if not particularly interesting. The mother's wifeish lines would, perhaps, have been tested in a furnace. He smarted at the blank of any, of even two or three formal words. She sulked? 'I am not a fallen lamb!' he said. Evidently one had to be a shivering beast in trouble, to excite her to move a hand.

Through so slight a fissure as this piece of discontent cracked in him, the crowd of his grievances with the

woman rushed pell-mell, deluging young shoots of sweeter feelings. She sulked! If that woman could not get the command, he was to know her incapable of submission. After besmutting the name she had filched from him, she let him understand that there was no intention to repent. Possibly she meant war. In which case a man must fly, or stand assailed by the most intolerable of vulgar farces;—to be compared to a pelting of one on the stage.

The time came for him to knock at doors and face his public.

## CHAPTER XXVIII

### BY CONCESSIONS TO MISTRESS GOSSIP A FURTHER INTRUSION IS AVERTED

Livia welcomed him, with commiserating inquiry behind her languid eyelids. 'You have all the latest?' it said.

He struck on the burning matter.

'You wish to know the part you have to play, ma'am.'

'Tell me, Russett.'

'You will contradict nothing.'

Her eyebrows asked, 'It means?'

'You have authority from me to admit the facts.'

'They are facts?' she remarked.

'Women love teasing round certain facts, apparently; like the Law courts over their pet cases.'

'But, Russett, will you listen?'

'Has the luck been civil of late?'

'I think of something else at present. No, it has not.'

'Abrane?'

'Pray, attend to me. No, not Abrane.'

'I believe you 've all been cleared out in my absence. St. Ombre?'

Her complexion varied. 'Mr. Ambrose Mallard has once or twice . . . But let me beg you—the town is raging with it. My dear Russett, a bold front now; there 's the chance of your release in view.'

'A rascal in view! Name the sum.'

'I must reckon. My head is—can you intend to submit?'

'So it 's Brosey Mallard now. You choose your deputy queerly. He 's as bad as Abrane, with steam to it. Chummy Potts would have done better.'

'He wins one night; loses every pound-note he has the next; and comes vaunting the "dry still Sillery" of the establishment,—a perpetual chorus to his losses!'

'His consolation to you for yours. That is the gentleman. Chummy doesn't change. Say, why not St. Ombre? He 's cool.'

'There are reasons.'

'Let them rest. And I have my reasons. Do the same for them.'

'Yours concerns the honour of the family.'

'Deeply: respect them.'

'Your relatives have to be thought of, though they are few and not too pleasant.'

'If I had thought much of them, what would our relations be? They object to dicing, and I to leading-strings.'

She turned to a brighter subject, of no visible connection with the preceding.

'Henrietta comes in May.'

'The month of her colours.'

'Her money troubles are terrible.'

'Both of you appear unlucky in your partners,—if winning was the object. She shall have all the distractions we can offer.'

'Your visit to the Chartreuse alarmed her.'

'She has rejoiced her husband.'

'A girl. She feared the Jesuit in your friend.'

'Feltre and she are about equally affected by music. They shall meet.'

'Russett, this once: I do entreat you to take counsel with your good sense, and remember that you stand where you are by going against my advice. It is a perfect storm over London. The world has not to be informed of your generosity; but a chivalry that invites the most horrible of sneers at a man! And what can I say? I have said it was impossible.'

'Add the postscript: you find it was perfectly possible.'

'I have to learn more than I care to hear.'

'Your knowledge is not in request: you will speak in my name.'

'Will you consult your lawyers, Russett, before you commit yourself?'

'I am on my way to Lady Arpington.'

'You cannot be thinking how serious it is.'

'I rather value the opinion of a hard-headed woman of the world.'

'Why not listen to me?'

'You have your points, ma'am.'

'She 's a torch.'

'She serves my purpose.'

Livia shrugged sadly. 'I suppose it serves your purpose to be unintelligible to me.'

He rendered himself intelligible immediately by saying, 'Before I go—a thousand?'

'Oh, my dear Russett!' she sighed.

'State the amount.'

She seemed to be casting unwieldy figures and he helped her with, 'Mr. Isaacs?'

'Not less than three, I fear.'

'Has he been pressing?'

'You are always good to us, Russett.'

'You are always considerate for the honour of the family, ma'am. Order for the money with you here to-morrow. And I thank you for your advice. Do me the favour to follow mine.'

'Commands should be the word.'

'Phrase it as you please.'

'You know I hate responsibility.'

'The chorus in classical dramas had generally that sentiment, but the singing was the sweeter for it.'

'Whom do you not win when you condescend to the mood, you dear boy.'

He restrained a bitter reply, touching the kind of persons he had won: a girl from the mountains, a philosophical tramp of the roads, troops of the bought.

Livia spelt at the problem he was. She put away the task of reading it. He departed to see Lady Arpington, and thereby rivet his chains.

As Livia had said, she was a torch. Lady Endor, Lady Eldritch, Lady Cowry, kindled at her. Again there were flights of the burning brands over London.

The very odd marriage; the no-marriage; the two-ends-of-the-town marriage; and the maiden marriage a fruitful marriage; the monstrous marriage of the countess productive in banishment, and the unreadable earl accepting paternity; this Amazing Marriage was again the riddle in the cracker for tattlers and gapers. It rattled upon the world's native wantonness, the world's acquired decorum: society's irrepressible original and its powerfully resisting second nature. All the rogues of the fine sphere ran about with it, male and female; and there was the narrative that suggestively skipped, and that which trod the minuet measure, dropping a curtsy to ravenous curiosity; the apology surrendering its defensible cause in supplications to benevolence; and the benevolence damnatory in a too eloquent urgency; followed by the devout objection to a breath of the subject, so blackening it as to call forth the profanely circumstantial exposition. Smirks, blushes, dead silences, and in the lower regions roars, hung round it.

But the lady, though absent, did not figure poorly at all. Granting Whitechapel and the shillelagh affair, certain whispers of her good looks, contested only to be the more violently asserted; and therewith Rose Mackrell's tale of her being a 'young woman of birth,' having a 'romantic story to tell of herself and her parentage,' made her latest performance the champagne event of it hitherto. Men sparkled when they had it on their lips.

How, then, London asked, would the Earl of Fleetwood move his pieces in reply to his countess's particularly clever indication of the check threatening mate?

His move had no relation to the game, it was thought at first. The world could not suppose that he moved a simple pawn on his marriage board. He purchased a shop in Piccadilly for the sale of fruit and flowers.

Lady Arpington was entreated to deal at the shop, Countess Livia had her orders; his friends, his parasites and satellites, were to deal there. Intensely earnest as usual, he besought great ladies to let him have the overflow of their hot-houses; and they classing it as another of the mystifications of a purse crazy for repleteness, inquired: 'But is it you we are to deal with?' And he quite seriously said: 'With me, yes, at present.' Something was behind the curtain, of course. His gravity had the effect of the ultra-comical in concealing it.

The shop was opened. We have the assurance of Rose Mackrell, that he entered and examined the piles and pans of fruits, and the bouquets cunningly arranged by a hand smelling French. The shop was roomy, splendid windows lighted the yellow, the golden, the green and parti-coloured stores. Four doors off, a chemist's motley in bellied glasses crashed on the sight. Passengers along the pavement had presented to them such a contrast as might be shown if we could imagine the Lethean ferry-boatload brought sharp against Pomona's lapful. In addition to the plucked flowers and fruits of the shop, Rose Mackrell more attentively examined the samples doing service at the counters. They were three, under supervision of a watchful-eyed fourth. Dame Gossip is for quoting his wit. But the conclusion he reached, after quitting the shop and pacing his dozen steps, is important; for it sent a wind

over the town to set the springs of tattle going as wildly as when the herald's trumpet blew the announcement for the world to hear out of Wales.

He had observed, that the young woman supervising was deficient in the ease of an established superior; her brows were troubled; she was, therefore, a lieutenant elevated from a lower grade; and, to his thinking, conducted the business during the temporary retirement of the mistress of the shop.

And the mistress of the shop?

The question hardly needs be put.

Rose Mackrell or his humour answered it in unfaltering terms.

London heard, with the variety of feelings which are indistinguishable under a flooding amazement, that the beautiful new fruit and flower shop had been purchased and stocked by the fabulously wealthy young Earl of Fleetwood, to give his Whitechapel Countess a taste for business, an occupation, and an honourable means of livelihood.

There was, Dame Gossip thumps to say, a general belief in this report. Crowds were on the pavement, peering through the shop-windows. Carriages driving by stopped to look. My lord himself had been visible, displaying his array of provisions to friends. Nor was credulity damped appreciably when over the shop, in gold letters, appeared the name of Sarah Winch. It might be the countess's maiden name, if she really was a married countess.

But, in truth, the better informed of the town, having begun to think its Crœsus capable of any eccentricity, chose to believe. They were at the pitch of excitement which demands and will swallow a succession of wilder

extravagances. To accelerate the delirium of the fun, nothing was too much, because any absurdity was anticipated. And the earl's readiness to be complimented on the shop's particular merits, his gratified air at an allusion to it, whirled the fun faster. He seemed entirely unconscious that each step he now took wakened peals.

For such is the fate of a man who has come to be dogged by the humorist for the provision he furnishes; and, as it happens, he is the more laughable if not in himself a laughable object. The earl's handsome figure, fine style, and contrasting sobriety heightened the burlesque of his call to admiration of a shop where Whitechapel would sit in state—according to the fiction so closely under the lee of fact that they were not strictly divisible. Moreover, Sarah Winch, whom Chumley Potts drew into conversation, said, he vowed, she came up West from Whitechapel. She said it a little nervously, but without blushing. Always on the side of the joke, he could ask: 'Who can doubt?' Indeed, scepticism poisoned the sport.

The Old Bucaneer has written: *Friends may laugh; I am not roused. My enemy's laugh is a bugle blown in the night.*

Our enemy's laugh at us rouses to wariness, he would say. He can barely mean, that a condition of drowsihead is other than providently warned by laughter of friends. An old warrior's tough fibre would, perhaps, be insensible to that small crackle. In civil life, however, the friend's laugh at us is the loudest of the danger signals to stop our course: and the very wealthy nobleman, who is known for not a fool, is kept from hearing it. Unless he does hear it, he can have no

suspicion of its being about him: he cannot imagine such *lèse-majesté* in the subservient courtiers too prudent to betray a sign. So Fleetwood was unwarned; and his child-like unconsciousness of the boiling sentiments around, seasoned, pricked, and maddened his parasites under compression to invent, for a faint relief. He had his title for them, they their tales of him.

Dame Gossip would recount the tales. She is of the order of persons inclining to suspect the tittle of truth in prodigies of scandal. She is rustling and bustling to us of 'Carinthia Jane's run up to London to see Sarah Winch's grand new shop,' an eclipse of all existing grand London western shops; and of Rose Mackrell's account of her dance of proud delight in the shop, ending with a 'lovely cheese' just as my lord enters; and then a scene, wild beyond any conceivable 'for pathos and humour'—her pet pair of the dissimilar twins, both banging at us for tear-drops by different roads, through a common aperture:—and the earl has the Whitechapel baby boy plumped into his arms; and the countess fetches him a splendid bob-dip and rises out of a second cheese to twirl and fandango it; and, all serious on a sudden, request, whimperingly beseech, his thanks to her for the crowing successor she has presented him with: my lord ultimately, but carefully, depositing the infant on a basket of the last oranges of the season, fresh from the Azores, by delivery off my lord's own schooner-yacht in Southampton water; and escaping, leaving his gold-headed stick behind him, a trophy for the countess? a weapon, it may be.

Quick she tucks up her skirts, she is after him. Dame Gossip speaks amusingly enough of the chase, and many

eye-witnesses to the earl's flight at top speed down the right side of the way along by the Green Park; and of a Prince of the Blood, a portly Royal Duke on foot, bumped by one or the other of them, she cannot precisely say which, but 'thinks it to have been Carinthia Jane,' because the exalted personage, his shock of surprise abating, turned and watched the chase, in much merriment. And it was called, we are informed, 'The Piccadilly Hare and Hound' from that day.

Some tradition of an extenuated nobleman pursued by a light-footed lady amid great excitement, there is; the Dame attaches importance also to verses of one of the ballads beginning to gain currency at the time (issuing ostensibly from London's poetic centre, the Seven Dials, which had, we are to conjecture, got the story by discolouring filtration through footmen retailing in public-houses the stock of anecdotes they gathered when stationed behind Rose Mackrell's chair, or Captain Abrane's, or Chumley Potts's), and would have the whole of it quoted:—

'Tho' fair I be as a powderèd peruke,
And once was a gaping silly,
Your Whitechapel Countess will prove, Lord Duke,
She 's a regular tiger-lily.
She 'll fight you with cold steel or she 'll run you off your legs
Down the length of Piccadilly!'

That will satisfy; and perhaps indicate the hand.

'Popular sympathy, of course, was all on the side of the Fair, as ever in those days when women had not forfeited it by stepping from their sanctuary seclusion.'

The Dame shall expose her confusions. She really would seem to fancy that the ballad verifies the main

lines of the story, which is an impossible one. Carinthia had not the means to travel: she was moneyless. Every bill of her establishment was paid without stint by Mr. Howell Edwards, the earl's manager of mines; but she had not even the means for a journey to the Gowerland rocks she longed to see. She had none since she forced her brother to take the half of her share of their inheritance, £1400, and sent him the remainder.

Accepted by Chillon John as a loan, says Dame Gossip, and no sooner received than consumed by the pressing necessities of a husband with the Rose Beauty of England to support in the comforts and luxuries he deemed befitting.

Still the Dame leans to her opinion that 'Carinthia Jane' may have been seen about London: for 'where we have much smoke there must be fire.' And the countess never denying an imputation not brought against her in her hearing, the ballad was unchallenged and London's wags had it their own way. Among the reasons why they so persistently hunted the earl, his air of a smart correctness shadowed by this new absurdity invited them, as when a spot of mud on the trimmest of countenances arrests observation. Humour plucked at him the more for the good faith of his handsome look under the prolific little disfigurement. Besides, a wealthy despot, with no conception of any hum around him, will have the wags in his track as surely as the flexibles in front: they avenge his exactions.

Fleetwood was honestly unaware of ridicule in the condition of inventive mania at his heels. Scheming, and hesitating to do, one-half of his mind was absorbed

with the problem of how now to treat the mother of his boy. Her behaviour in becoming a mother was acknowledged to be good: the production of a boy was good—considerate, he almost thought. He grew so far reconciled to her as to have intimations of a softness coming on; a wish to hear her speak of the trifling kindness done to the sister of Madge in reward of kindness done to her; wishes for looks he remembered, secret to him, more his own than any possessions. Dozens of men had wealth, some had beautiful wives; none could claim as his own that face of the look of sharp steel melting into the bridal flower, when she sprang from her bed to defend herself and recognized the intruder at her window, stood smitten:—'It is my husband.' Moonlight gave the variation of her features.

And that did not appease the resentment tearing him from her, so justifiable then, as he forced himself to think, now hideous. Glimpses of the pictures his deeds painted of him since his first meeting with this woman had to be shunned. He threw them off; they were set down to the mystery men are. The degrading, utterly different, back view of them teaches that Life is an irony. If the teaching is not accepted, and we are to take the blame, can we bear to live? Therefore, either way the irony of Life is proved. Young men straining at thought, in the grip of their sensations, reach this logical conclusion. They will not begin by examining the ground they stand on, and questioning whether they have consciences at peace with the steps to rearward.

Having established Life as the coldly malignant element, which induces to what it chastises, a loathing

of womanhood, the deputed Mother of Life, ensues, by natural sequence. And if there be one among women who disturbs the serenity we choose to think our due, she wears for us the sinister aspect of a confidential messenger between Nemesis and the Parcæ. Fleetwood was thus compelled to regard Carinthia as both originally and successively the cause of his internal as well as his exterior discomfort; otherwise those glimpses would have burnt into perpetual stigmas. He had also to get his mind away from her. They pleaded against him volubly with the rising of her image into it.

His manager at the mines had sent word of ominous discontent down there. His presence might be required. Obviously, then, the threatened place was unfitting for the Countess of Fleetwood. He despatched a kind of order through Mr. Howell Edwards, that she should remove to Esslemont to escape annoyances. Esslemont was the preferable residence. She could there entertain her friends, could spend a pleasanter time there.

He waited for the reply; Edwards deferred it.

Were they to be in a struggle with her obstinate will once more?

Henrietta was preparing to leave London for her dismal, narrow, and, after an absence, desired love-nest. The earl called to say farewell, cool as a loyal wife could wish him to be, admiring perforce. Marriage and maternity withdrew nothing—added to the fair young woman's bloom.

She had gone to her room to pack and dress. Livia received him. In the midst of the casual commonplaces her memory was enlightened.

'Oh,' said she, and idly drew a letter out of a blotting-pad, 'we have heard from Wales.' She handed it to him.

Before he knew the thing he did, he was reading:—

'There is no rest for my brother, and I cannot help; I am kept so poor I have not the smallest of sums. I do not wish to leave Wales—the people begin to love me; and can one be mistaken? I know if I am loved or hated. But if my lord will give me an allowance of money of some hundreds, I will do his bidding; I will leave England or I will go to Esslemont; I could say—to Mr. Woodseer, in that part of London. He would not permit. He thinks me blacked by it, like a sweep-boy coming from a chimney; and that I have done injury to his title. No, Riette, to be a true sister, I must bargain with my lord before I submit. He has not cared to come and see his little son. His boy has not offended him. There may be some of me in this dear. I know whose features will soon show to defend the mother's good name. He is early my champion. He is not christened yet, and I hear it accuse me, and I am not to blame,—I still wait my lord's answer.'

'Don't be bothered to read the whole,' Livia had said, with her hand out, when his eyes were halfway down the page.

Fleetwood turned it, to read the signature: 'Janey.'

She seemed servile enough to some of her friends. 'Carinthia' would have had a pleasanter sound. He folded the letter.

'Why give me this? Take it,' said he.

She laid it on the open pad.

Henrietta entered and had it restored to her, Livia remarking: 'I found it in the blotter after all.'

She left them together, having to dress for the drive to the coach office with Henrietta.

'Poor amusement for you this time.' Fleetwood bowed, gently smiling.

'Oh!' cried Henrietta, 'balls, routs, dinners, music —as much music as I could desire, even I! What more could be asked? I am eternally grateful.'

'The world says, you are more beautiful than ever.'

'Happiness does it, then,—happiness owing to you, Lord Fleetwood.'

'Columelli pleases you?'

'His voice is heavenly! He carries me away from earth.'

'He is a gentleman, too—rare with those fellows.'

'A pretty manner. He will speak his compliments in his English.'

'You are seasoned to endure them in all languages. Pity another of your wounded:—Brailstone has been hard hit at the tables.'

'I cannot pity gamblers.—May I venture?—half a word?'

'Tomes! But just a little compassion for the devoted. He wouldn't play so madly—if, well, say a tenth dilution of the rapt hearing Columelli gets.'

'Signor Columelli sings divinely.'

'You don't dislike Brailstone?'

'He is one of the agreeable.'

'He must put his feelings into Italian song!'

'To put them aside will do.'

'We are not to have our feelings?'

'Yes, on the proviso that ours are respected. But,

one instant, Lord Fleetwood, pray. She is—I have to speak of her as my sister. I am sure she regrets . . . She writes very nicely.'

'You have a letter from her.'

Henrietta sighed that it would not bear exposure to him: 'Yes.'

'Nicely worded?'

'Well, yes, it is.'

He paused, not expecting that the letter would be shown, but silence fired shots, and he had stopped the petition. 'We are to have you for a week's yachting. You prescribe your company. Only be merciful. Exclusion will mean death to some. Columelli will be touring in Switzerland. You shall have him in the house when my new bit of ground Northwest of London is open: very handy, ten miles out. We'll have the Opera troupe there, and you shall command the Opera.'

Her beauty sweetened to thank him.

If, as Livia said, his passion for her was unchanged, the generosity manifested in the considerate screen it wore over any physical betrayal of it, deserved the lustre of her eyes. It dwelt a moment, vivid with the heart close behind and remorseful for misreading of old his fine character. Here was a young man who could be the very kindest of friends to the woman rejecting him to wed another. Her smile wavered. How shall a loving wife express warmth of sentiment elsewhere, without the one beam too much, that plunges her on a tideway? His claim of nothing called for everything short of the proscribed. She gave him her beauty in fullest flower.

It had the appearance of a temptation; and he was

not tempted, though he admired; his thought being, Husband of the thing!

But he admired. That condition awakened his unsatisfied past days to desire positive proof of her worthlessness. The past days writhed in him. The present were loveless, entirely cold. He had not even the wish to press her hand. The market held beautiful women of a like description. He wished simply to see her proved the thing he read her to be: and not proved as such by himself. He was unable to summon or imagine emotion enough for him to simulate the forms by which fair women are wooed to their perdition. For all he cared, any man on earth might try, succeed or fail, as long as he had visual assurance that she coveted, a slave to the pleasures commanded by the wealth once disdained by her. Till that time, he could not feel himself perfectly free.

Dame Gossip prefers to ejaculate, Young men are mysteries! and bowl us onward. No one ever did comprehend the Earl of Fleetwood, she says: he was bad, he was good; he was whimsical and steadfast; a splendid figure, a mark for ridicule; romantic and a close arithmetician; often a devil, sometimes the humanest of creatures.

In fine, he was a millionaire nobleman, owning to a considerable infusion of Welsh blood in the composition of him. Now, to the Cymry and to the pure Kelt, the past is at their elbows continually. The past of their lives has lost neither face nor voice behind the shroud; nor are the passions of the flesh, nor is the animate soul, wanting to it. Other races forfeit infancy, forfeit youth and manhood with their progression to the wisdom age may bestow. These

have each stage always alive, quick at a word, a scent, a sound, to conjure up scenes, in spirit and in flame. Historically, they still march with Cadwallader, with Llewellyn, with Glendower; sing with Aneurin, Taliesin, old Llywarch: individually, they are in the heart of the injury done them thirty years back, or thrilling to the glorious deed which strikes an empty buckler for most of the sons of Time. An old sea rises in them, rolling no phantom billows to break to spray against existing rocks of the shore. That is why, and even if they have a dose of the Teuton in them, they have often to feel themselves exiles when still in amicable community among the preponderating Saxon English.

Add to the single differentiation enormous wealth —we convulse the excellent Dame by terming it a chained hurricane, to launch in foul blasts or beneficent showers, according to the moods during youth— and the composite Lord Fleetwood comes nearer into our focus. Dame Gossip, with her jigging to be at the butterwoman's trot, when she is not violently interrupting, would suffer just punishment were we to digress upon the morality of a young man's legal possession of enormous wealth as well.

Wholly Cambrian Fleetwood was not. But he had to the full the Cambrian's reverential esteem for high qualities. His good-bye with Henrietta, and estimate of her, left a dusky mental void requiring an orb of some sort for contemplation; and an idea of the totally contrary Carinthia, the woman he had avowedly wedded, usurped her place. Qualities were admitted. She was thrust away because she had offended: still more because he had offended. She bore the blame for forcing

him to an examination of his conduct at this point and that, where an ancestral savage in his lineaments cocked a strange eye. Yet at the moment of the act of the deed he had known himself the veritable Fleetwood. He had now to vindicate himself by extinguishing her under the load of her unwomanliness: she was like sun-dried linen matched beside oriental silk: she was rough, crisp, unyielding. That was now the capital charge. Henrietta could never be guilty of the unfeminine. Which did he prefer?

It is of all questions the one causing young men to screw wry faces when they are asked; they do so love the feminine, the ultra-feminine, whom they hate for her inclination to the frail. His depths were sounded, and he answered independently of his will, that he must be up to the heroical pitch to decide. Carinthia stood near him then. The confession was a step, and fraught with consequences. Her unacknowledged influence expedited him to Sarah Winch's shop, for sight of one of earth's honest souls; from whom he had the latest of the two others down in Wales, and of an infant there.

He dined the host of his Ixionides, leaving them early for a drive at night Eastward, and a chat with old Mr. Woodseer over his punching and sewing of his boot-leather. Another honest soul. Mr. Woodseer thankfully consented to mount his coach-box next day, and astonish Gower with a drop on his head from the skies about the time of the mid-day meal.

There we have our peep into Dame Gossip's young man mysterious.

## CHAPTER XXIX

### CARINTHIA IN WALES

An August of gales and rains drove Atlantic air over the Welsh highlands. Carinthia's old father had impressed on her the rapture of 'smelling salt' when by chance he stood and threw up his nostrils to sniff largely over a bed of bracken, that reminded him of his element, and her fancy would be at strain to catch his once proud riding of the seas. She felt herself an elder daughter of the beloved old father, as she breathed it in full volume from the billowy West one morning early after sunrise and walked sisterly with the far-seen inexperienced little maid, whom she saw trotting beside him through the mountain forest, listening, storing his words, picturing the magnetic, veined great gloom of an untasted world.

This elder daughter had undergone a shipwreck; but clear proof that she had not been worsted was in the unclouded liveliness of the younger one gazing forward. Imaginative creatures who are courageous will never be lopped of the hopeful portion of their days by personal misfortune. Carinthia could animate both; it would have been a hurt done to a living human soul had she suffered the younger self to run overcast. Only, the gazing forward had become interdicted to her experienced self. Nor could she vision a future having any horizon for her child. She saw it in bleak squares, and snuggled him between dangers weathered and dangers apprehended.

The conviction that her husband hated her had sunk into her nature. Hating the mother, he would not love

her boy. They were burdens, and the heir of his House, child of a hated mother, was under perpetual menace from an unscrupulous tyrannical man. The dread and antagonism were first aroused by the birth of her child. She had not known while bearing him her present acute sensation of the hunted flying and at bay. Previously, she could say: I did wrong here; I did wrong there. Distrust had brought the state of war, which allows not of the wasting of our powers in confessions.

Her husband fed her and he clothed her; the limitation of his bounty was sharply outlined. Sure of her rectitude, a stranger to the world, she was not very sensible of dishonour done to her name. It happened at times that her father inquired of her how things were going with his little Carin; and then revolt sprang up and answered on his behalf rather fiercely. She was, however, prepared for any treaty including forgiveness, if she could be at peace in regard to her boy, and have an income of some help to her brother. Chillon was harassed on all sides; she stood incapable of aiding; so foolishly feeble in the shadow of her immense longing to strive for him, that she could think her husband had purposely lamed her with an infant. Her love of her brother, now the one man she loved, laid her insufficiency on the rack and tortured imbecile cries from it.

On the contrary, her strange husband had blest her with an infant. Everything was pardonable to him if he left her boy untouched in the mother's charge. Much alone as she was, she raised the dead to pet and cherish her boy. Chillon had seen him and praised him. Mrs. Owain Wythan, her neighbour over a hill, praised him above all babes on earth, poor childless woman!

She was about to cross the hill and breakfast with Mrs. Wythan. The time for the weaning of the babe approached, and had as prospect beyond it her dull fear that her husband would say the mother's work was done, and seize the pretext to separate them: and she could not claim a longer term to be giving milk, because her father had said: 'Not a quarter of a month more than nine for the milk of the mother'—or else the child would draw an unsustaining nourishment from the strongest breast. She could have argued her exceptional robustness against another than he. But the dead father wanting to build a great race of men and women ruled.

Carinthia knelt at the cradle of a princeling gone from the rich repast to his alternative kingdom.

'You will bring him over when he wakes,' she said to Madge. 'Mrs. Wythan would like to see him every day. Martha can walk now.'

'She can walk and hold a child in her two arms, my lady,' said Madge. 'She expects miners popping up out of the bare ground when she sees no goblins.'

'They!—they know him, they would not hurt him, they know my son,' her mistress answered.

The population of the mines in revolt had no alarms for her. The works were empty down below. Men sat by the wayside brooding or strolled in groups, now and then loudly exercising their tongues; or they stood in circle to sing hymns: melancholy chants of a melancholy time for all.

How would her father have acted by these men? He would have been among them. Dissensions in his mine were vapours of a day. Lords behaved differently. Carinthia fancied the people must regard their master

as a foreign wizard, whose power they felt, without the chance of making their cry to him heard. She, too, dealt with a lord. It was now his wish for her to leave the place where she had found some shreds of a home in the thought of being useful. She was gathering the people's language; many of their songs she could sing, and please them by singing to them. They were not suspicious of her; at least, their women had open doors for her; the men, if shy, were civil. She had only to go below, she was greeted in the quick tones of their speech all along the street of the slate-roofs.

But none loved the castle, and she as little, saving the one room in it where her boy lay. The grey of Welsh history knew a real castle beside the roaring brook frequently a torrent. This was an eighteenth century castellated habitation on the verge of a small wood midway up the height, and it required a survey of numberless happy recollections to illumine its walls or drape its chambers. The permanently lighted hearth of a dear home, as in that forsaken unfavoured old white house of the wooded Austrian crags, it had not. Rather it seemed a place waiting for an ill deed to be done in it and stop all lighting of hearths thereafter.

Out on the turf of the shaven hills, her springy step dispersed any misty fancies. Her short-winged hive set to work in her head as usual, building scaffoldings of great things to be done by Chillon, present evils escaped. The rolling big bare hills with the riding clouds excited her as she mounted, and she was a figure of gladness on the ridge bending over to hospitable Plas Llwyn, where the Wythans lived, entertaining rich and poor alike. They had led the neighbourhood to call on the discarded Countess of Fleetwood.

A warm strain of arms about her neck was Carinthia's welcome from Mrs. Wythan lying along the couch in her boudoir; an established invalid, who yearned sanely to life, and caught a spark of it from the guest eyed tenderly by her as they conversed.

'Our boy?—our Chillon Kirby till he has his baptism names; he is well? I am to see him?'

'He follows me. He sleeps almost through the night now.'

'Ah, my dear,' Mrs. Wythan sighed, imagining: 'It would disappoint me if he did not wake me.'

'I wake at his old time and watch him.'

Carinthia put on the baby's face in the soft mould of slumber.

'I see him!' Mrs. Wythan cried. 'He is part mine. He has taught Owain to love babies.'

A tray of breakfast was placed before the countess. 'Mr. Wythan is down among his men?' she said.

'Every morning, as long as this agitation lasts. I need not say, good appetite to you after your walk. You have no fear of the men, I know. Owain's men are undisturbed; he has them in hand. Absentee masters can't expect continued harmony. Dear, he tells me Mr. Edwards awaits the earl.'

Drinking her tea, Carinthia's eyelids shut; she set down her cup, 'If he must come,' she said. 'He wishes me to leave. I am to go again where I have no friends, and no language to learn, and can be of no use. It is not for me that I dread his coming. He speaks to command. The men ask to be heard. He will have submission first. They do not trust him. His coming is a danger. For me, I should wish him to come. May I say? . . .'

'Your Rebecca bids you say, my darling.'

'It is, I am with the men because I am so like them. I beg to be heard. He commands obedience. He is a great nobleman, but I am the daughter of a greater man, and I have to say, that if those poor miners do harm, I will not stand by and see an anger against injustice punished. I wish his coming, for him to agree upon the Christian names of the boy. I feel his coming will do me injury in making me offend him worse. I would avoid that. Oh, dear soul! I may say it to you:—he cannot hurt me any more. I am spared loving him when I forgive him; and I do. The loving is the pain. That is gone by.'

Mrs. Wythan fondled and kissed Carinthia's hand.

'Let me say in my turn; I may help you, dear. You know I have my husband's love, as he mine. Am I, have I ever been a wife to him? Here I lie, a dead weight, to be carried up and down, all of a wife that Owain has had for years. I lie and pray to be taken, that my good man, my proved good man, may be free to choose a healthy young woman and be rewarded before his end by learning what a true marriage is. The big simpleton will otherwise be going to his grave, thinking he was married! I see him stepping about softly in my room, so contented if he does not disturb me, and he crushes me with a desire to laugh at him while I worship. I tricked him into marrying the prostrate invalid I am, and he can't discover the trick, he *will* think it's a wife he has, instead of a doctor's doll. Oh! you have a strange husband, it has been a strange marriage for you, but you have your invincible health, you have not to lie and feel the horror of being a deception to a guileless man, whose love blindfolds

him. The bitter ache to me is, that I can give nothing. You abound in power to give.'

Carinthia lifted her open hands for sign of their emptiness.

'My brother would not want, if I could give. He may have to sell out of the army, he thinks, fears; and I must look on. Our mother used to say she had done something for her country in giving a son like Chillon to the British army. Poor mother! Our bright opening days all seem to end in rain. We should turn to Mr. Wythan for a guide.'

'He calls you Morgan le Fay christianized.'

'What I am!' Carinthia raised and let fall her head. 'An example makes dwarfs of us. When Mr. Wythan does penance for temper by descending into his mine and working among his men for a day with the pick, seated, as he showed me down below, that is an example. If I did like that, I should have no firedamp in the breast, and not such a task to forgive, that when I succeed I kill my feelings.'

The entry of Madge and Martha, the nurse-girl, with the overflowing armful of baby, changed their converse into melodious exclamations.

'Kit Ines has arrived, my lady,' Madge said. 'I saw him on the road, and stopped a minute.'

Mrs. Wythan studied Carinthia. Her sharp invalid's ears had caught the name. She beckoned. 'The man who—the fighting man?'

'It will be my child this time,' said Carinthia; 'I have no fear for myself.' She was trembling, though her features were hard for the war her lord had declared, as it seemed. 'Did he tell you his business here?' she asked of Madge.

'He says, to protect you, my lady, since you won't leave.'

'He stays at the castle?'

'He is to stay there, he says, as long as the Welsh are out.'

'The "Welsh" are misunderstood by Lord Fleetwood,' Mrs. Wythan said to Carinthia. 'He should live among them. They will not hurt their lady. Protecting may be his attention; but we will have our baby safe here. Not?' she appealed. 'And baby's mother. How otherwise?'

'You read my wishes,' Carinthia rejoined. 'The man I do not think a bad man. He has a master. While I am bound to my child I must be restful, and with the man at the castle Martha's goblins would jump about me day and night. My boy makes a coward of his mother.'

'We merely take a precaution, and I have the pleasure of it,' said her hostess. 'Give orders to your maid: not less than a fortnight. It will rejoice my husband so much.'

As with the warmly hospitable, few were the words. Madge was promised by her mistress plenty of opportunities daily for seeing Kit Ines, and her mouth screwed to one of women's dimples at a corner. She went off in a cart to fetch boxes, thinking: We are a hunted lot! So she was not mildly disposed for the company of Mr. Kit on her return to the castle.

England's champion light-weight thought it hard that his coming down to protect the castle against the gibbering heathen Welsh should cause a clearing out, and solitariness for his portion.

'What's the good of innocence if you're always

going to suspect a man!' he put it, like a true son of the pirates turned traders. 'I've got a paytron, and a man in my profession must have a paytron, or where is he? Where's his money for a trial of skill? Say he saves and borrows and finds the lump to clap it down, and he's knocked out o' time. There he is, bankrup', and a devil of a licking into the bargain. That's the cream of our profession, if a man has got no paytron. No prize-ring can live without one. The odds are too hard on us. My lady ought to take into account I behaved respectful when I was obliged to do my lord's orders and remove her from our haunts, which wasn't to his taste. Here I'm like a cannon for defending the house, needs be, and all inside flies off scarified.'

'It strikes me, Kit Ines, a man with a paytron is no better than a tool of a man,' said Madge.

'And don't you go to be sneering at honest tools,' Ines retorted. 'When will women learn a bit of the world before they're made hags of by old Father Wear-and-Tear! A young woman in her prime, you Madge! be such a fool as not see I serve tool to stock our shop.'

'Your paytron bid you steal off with my lady's child, Kit Ines, you'd do it to stock your shop.'

Ines puffed. 'If you ain't a girl to wallop the wind! Fancy me at that game! Is that why my lady—but I can't be suspected that far? You make me break out at my pores. My paytron's a gentleman: he wouldn't ask and I couldn't act such a part. Dear Lord! it'd have to be stealing off, for my lady can use a stick; and put it to the choice between my lady and her child and any paytron living, paytron be damned, I'd say,

rather 'n go against my notions of honour. Have you forgot all our old talk about the prize-ring, the nursery of honour in Old England?'

'That was before you sold yourself to a paytron, Kit Ines.'

'Ah! Women wants mast-heading off and on, for 'em to have a bit of a look-out over life as it is. They go stewing over books of adventure and drop into frights about awful man. Take me, now; you had a no small admiration for my manly valour once, and you trusted yourself to me, and did you ever repent it? —owning you 're not the young woman to tempt to t'other way.'

'You wouldn't have found me talking to you here if I had.'

'And here I 'm left to defend an empty castle, am I?'

'Don't drink or you 'll have your paytron on you. He 's good use there.'

'I ask it, can I see my lady?'

'Drunk nor sober you won't. Serve a paytron, be a leper, you 'll find, with all honest folk.'

Ines shook out an execrating leg at the foul word. 'Leper, you say? You say that? You say leper to me?'

'Strut your tallest, Kit Ines. It 's the money rattles in your pocket says it.'

'It 's my reputation for decent treatment of a woman lets you say it, Madge Winch.'

'Stick to that as long as your paytron consents. It 's the one thing you 've got left.'

'Benefit, you hussy, and mind you don't pull too stiff.'

'Be the woman and have the last word!'

His tongue was checked. He swallowed the exceeding sourness of a retort undelivered, together with the feeling that she beat him in the wrangle by dint of her being an unreasonable wench.

Madge huffed away to fill her boxes.

He stood by the cart, hands deep down his pockets, when she descended. She could have laughed at the spectacle of a champion prize-fighter out of employ, hulking idle, because he was dog to a patron; but her contempt of him declined passing in small change.

'So you 're off. What am I to tell my lord when he comes?' Kit growled. 'His yacht's fetching for a Welsh seaport.'

She counted it a piece of information gained, and jumped to her seat, bidding the driver start. To have pretty well lost her character for a hero changed into a patron's dog, was a thought that outweighed the show of incivility. Some little distance away, she reproached herself for not having been so civil as to inquire what day my lord was expected, by his appointment. The girl reflected on the strangeness of a body of discontented miners bringing my lord and my lady close, perhaps to meet.

## CHAPTER XXX

### REBECCA WYTHAN

The earl was looked for at the chief office of the mines, and each day an expectation of him closed in disappoint-

ment, leaving it to be surmised that there were more serious reasons for his continued absence during a crisis than any discussed; whether indeed, as when a timepiece neglects to strike the hour which is, by the reckoning of natural impatience, past, the capital charge of 'crazy works' must not be brought against a nobleman hitherto precise upon business, of a just disposition, fairly humane. For though he was an absentee sucking the earth through a tube, in Ottoman ease, he had never omitted the duty of personally attending on the spot to grave cases under dispute. The son of the hard-headed father came out at a crisis; and not too high-handedly: he could hear an opposite argument to the end. Therefore, since he refused to comply without hearing, he was wanted on the spot imperatively now.

Irony perusing History offers the beaten and indolent a sugary acid in the indication of the spites and the pranks, the whims and the tastes, at the springs of main events. It is, taken by itself, destructive nourishment. But those who labour in the field to shovel the clods of earth to History, would be wiser of their fellows for a minor dose of it. Mr. Howell Edwards consulting with Mr. Owain Wythan on the necessity, that the earl should instantly keep his promise to appear among the men and stop the fermentation, as in our younger days a lordly owner still might do by small concessions and the physical influence — the nerve-charm—could suppose him to be holding aloof for his pleasure or his pride; perhaps because of illness or inability to conceive the actual situation at a distance. He mentioned the presence of the countess, and Mr. Wythan mentioned it, neither of them thinking a rational man would so play the lunatic as to let men

starve, and wreck precious mines, for the sake of avoiding her.

Sullen days went by. On these days of the slate-cloud or the leaden-winged, Carinthia walked over the hills to her staring or down-eyed silent people, admitted without a welcome at some doors, rejected at some. Her baskets from the castle were for the most part received as graciously. She continued to direct them for delivery where they were needed, and understood why a charity that supplied the place of justice was not thanked. She and her people here were one regarding the master, as she had said. They could not hurt her sensitiveness, she felt too warmly with them. And here it was not the squalid, flat, bricked east-corner of London at the close of her daily pilgrimage. Up from the solitary street of the slate-roofs, she mounted a big hill and had the life of high breathing. A perpetual escape out of the smoky, grimy city mazes was trumpeted to her in the winds up there: a recollected contrast lightened the skyless broad spaces overhead almost to sunniness. Having air of the hills and activity for her limbs, she made sunshine for herself. Regrets were at no time her nestlings.

*Look backward only to correct an error of conduct for the next attempt*, says one of her father's Maxims; as sharply bracing for women as for men. She did not look back to moan. Now that her hunger for the safety of her infant was momentarily quieted, she could see Kit Ines hanging about the lower ground, near the ale-house, and smile at Madge's comparison of him to a drummed-out soldier, who would like to be taken for a holiday pensioner.

He saluted; under the suspicion of his patron's lady

his legs were hampered, he dared not approach her; though his innocence of a deed not proposed to him yet—and all to stock that girl Madge's shop, if done!—knocked at his ribs with fury to vindicate himself before the lady and her maid. A gentleman met them and conducted them across the hills.

And two Taffy gentlemen would hardly be sufficient for the purpose, supposing an ill-used Englishman inclined to block their way!—What, and play footpad, Kit Ines? No, it's just a game in the head. But a true man hates to feel himself suspected. His refuge is the beer of the country.

Next day there were the two gentlemen to conduct the lady and her maid; and Taffy the first walks beside the countess; and that girl Madge trudges along with no other than my lord's Mr. Woodseer, chattering like a watering-can on a garden-bed: deuce a glance at Kit Ines. How can she keep it up and the gentleman no more than nodding? How does he enjoy playing second fiddle with the maid while Mr. tall brown-face Taffy violins it to her ladyship a stone's throw in front? —Ines had less curiosity to know the object of Mr. Woodseer's appearance on the scene. Idle, unhandsomely treated, and a cave of the yawns, he merely commented on his observations.

'Yes, there he is, don't look at him,' Madge said to Gower; 'and whatever he's here for, he has a bad time of it, and rather more than it's pleasant for him to think over, if a slave to a "paytron" thinks at all. I won't judge him; my mistress is bitten with the fear for the child, worse than ever. And the earl, my lord, not coming, and he wanting her to move again, seems to her he durstn't do it here and intends to snap at

the child on the road. She 's forced to believe anything of such a husband and father. And why does he behave so? I can't spell it. He 's kind to my Sally—you 've seen the Piccadilly shop?—because she was . . . she did her best in love and duty for my lady. And behaves like a husband hating his wife's life on earth! When he went down with good Mr. Woodseer, and called on Sally, pretending to inquire, after she was kidnapped by that Kit Ines acting to please his paytron, he must be shown up to the room where she slept, and stands at the door and peeps in, Sally's letter says, and asks if he may enter the room. He went to the window looking on the chimneys she used to see, and touched an ornament over the fireplace, called grandfather's pigtail case—he was a sailor; only a ridiculous piece of china, that made my lady laugh about the story of its holding a pigtail. But he turns it over because she did—Sally told him. He couldn't be pretending when he bought the beautiful shop and stocked it for Sally. He gets her lots of customers; and no rent to pay till next Michaelmas a year. She 's a made woman through him. He said to her, he had heard from Mr. Woodseer the Countess of Fleetwood called her sister; he shook her hand.'

'The Countess of Fleetwood called both of you her sisters, I think,' said Gower.

'I 'm her servant. I 'd rather serve her than have a fortune.'

'You were born with a fortune one would like to have a nibble at, Madge.'

'I can't lay hand on it, then.'

'It 's the capacity for giving, my dear.'

'Please, Mr. Gower, don't say that; you 'll make me

cry. He keeps his wife so poor she hasn't a shilling of her own; she wearies about her brother; she can't help. He can spend hundreds on my Sally for having been good to her, in our small way—it's a fairy tale; and he won't hear of money for his wife, except that she's never to want for anything it can buy.'

'You give what it can't buy.'

'Me. I'm "a pugilist's wench"—I've heard myself called. She was the first who gave me a lift; never mind me. Have you come to take her away? She'd trust herself and the child to you.'

'Take her?—reason with her as to the best we can do. He holds off from a meeting just now. I fancy he's wearing round to it. His keeping his wife without money passes comprehension. After serving him for a few months, I had a store invested to support me for years—as much as I need before I join the ranks of the pen. I was at my reading and writing and drowsing, and down he rushes: I'm in harness again. I can't say it's dead waste of time; besides I pick up an independence for the days ahead. But I don't respect myself for doing the work. Here's the difference between us two servants, Madge: I think of myself, and you don't.'

'The difference is more like between the master and mistress we serve, Mr. Gower.'

'Well, I'd rather be the woman in this case.'

'You know the reputation I've got. And can only just read, and can't spell. My mistress teaches me bits of German and French on her walks.'

Gower took a new observation of this girl, whom he had not regarded as like himself, a pushing blade among the grasses. He proposed to continue her

lessons, if she cared to learn; saying it could be done in letters.

'I won't be ashamed of writing, if you mean it,' said she. 'My mistress will have a usefuller servant. She had a strange honeymoon of a marriage, if ever was: and told me t'other day she was glad because it brought us together—she a born lady!'

'A fling above born ladies. She's quick as light to hit on a jewel where there is one, whether it shines or not. She stands among the Verities of the world.'

'Yes,' Madge said, panting for more. 'Do speak of her. When you praise her, I feel she's not wasted. Mistress; and friend and wife—if he'd let her be; and mother; never mother like her. The boy'll be a sturdy. She'll see he has every chance. He's a lucky little one to have that mother.'

'You think her handsome, Madge?'

Gower asked it, wishing to hear a devotee's confusion of qualities and looks.

The question was a drop on lower spheres, and it required definitions, to touch the exact nature of the form of beauty, and excuse a cooler tone on the commoner plane. These demanded language. She rounded the difficulty, saying: 'You see engravings of archery; that's her figure—her real figure. I think her face . . . I can't describe . . . it flashes.'

'That's it,' said Gower, delighted with his perception of a bare mind at work and hitting the mark perforce of warmth. 'When it flashes, it's unequalled. There's the supremacy of irregular lines. People talk of perfect beauty: suitable for paintings and statues. Living faces, if they're to show the soul, which is the star on the peak of beauty, must lend themselves to com-

motion. Nature does it in a breezy tree or over ruffled waters. Repose has never such splendid reach as animation—I mean, in the living face. Artists prefer repose. Only Nature can express the uttermost beauty with her gathering and tuning of discords. Well, your mistress has that beauty. I remember my impression when I saw her first on her mountains abroad. Other beautiful faces of women go pale, grow stale. The diversified in the harmony of the flash are Nature's own, her radiant, made of her many notes, beyond our dreams to reproduce. We can't hope to have a true portrait of your mistress. Does Madge understand?'

The literary dose was a strong one for her; but she saw the index, and got a lift from the sound. Her bosom heaved. 'Oh, I do try, Mr. Gower. I think I do a little. I do more while you're talking. You are good to talk so to me. You should have seen her the night she went to meet my lord at those beastly Gardens Kit Ines told me he was going to. She was defending him. I've no words. You teach me what's meant by poetry. I couldn't understand that once.'

Their eyes were on the countess and her escort in advance. Gower's praises of her mistress's peculiar beauty set the girl compassionately musing. His eloquence upon the beauty was her clue.

Carinthia and Mr. Wythan started at a sharp trot in the direction of the pair of ponies driven by a groom along the curved decline of the narrow roadway. His whip was up for signal.

It concerned the house and the master of it. His groom drove rapidly down, while he hurried on the

homeward way, as a man will do, with the dread upon him that his wife's last breath may have been yielded before he can enfold her.

Carinthia walked to be overtaken, not daring to fever her blood at a swifter pace; 'lamed with an infant,' the thought recurred.

'She is very ill, she has fainted, she lies insensible,' Madge heard from her of Mrs. Wythan. 'We were speaking of her when the groom appeared. It has happened twice. They fear the third. He fears it, though he laughs at a superstition. Now step, I know you like walking, Mr. Woodseer. Once I left you behind.'

'I have the whole scene of the angel and the cripple,' Gower replied.

'O that day!'

They were soon speculating on the unimpressionable house in its clump of wood midway below, which had no response for anxieties.

A maid-servant at the garden gate, by Mr. Wythan's orders, informed Carinthia that her mistress had opened her eyes. There was a hope of weathering the ominous third time. But the hope was a bird of short flight from bush to bush until the doctor should speak to confirm it. Even the child was under the shadow of the house. Carinthia had him in her arms, trusting to life as she hugged him, and seeing innumerable darts out of all regions assailing her treasure.

'She wishes to have you,' Mr. Wythan came and said to her. 'Almost her first word. The heart is quickening. She will live for me if she can.'

He whispered it. His features shot the sparkle.

Rebecca Wythan had strength to press Carinthia's

hand faintly. She made herself heard: 'No pain.' Her husband sat upright, quite still, attentive for any sign. His look of quiet pleasure ready to show sprightliness dwelt on her. She returned the look, unable to give it greeting. Past the sense of humour, she wanted to say: 'See the poor simple fellow who will think it a wife that he has!' She did but look.

Carinthia spoke his name, 'Mr. Wythan,' by chance, and Rebecca breathed heavily until she formed the words: 'Owain to me.'

'To me,' Owain added.

The three formed a chain of clasped hands.

It was in the mind of the sick lady to disburden herself of more than her weakness could utter, so far was she above earthly links. The desire in her was to be quit of the flesh, bearing a picture of her husband as having the dues of his merits.

Her recovered strength next day brought her nearer to our laws. 'You will call him Owain, Carinthia?' she said. 'He is not one to presume on familiarity. I must be going soon. I cannot leave him the wife I would choose. I can leave him the sister. He is a sure friend. He is the knightly man women dream of. I harp on it because I long for testimony that I leave him to have some reward. And this may be, between two so pure at heart as you two.'

'Dear soul! friend, yes, and Owain, yes, I can say it,' Carinthia rejoined. 'Brother? I have only my Chillon. My life is now for him. I am punished for separating myself from the son of my father. I have no heart for a second brother. What I can give to my friend I will. I shall love you in him, if I am to lose you.'

'Not Owain—it was I was the wretch refused to call

on the lonely lady at the castle until I heard she had done a romantic little bit of thing—hushed a lambkin's bleating. My loss! my loss! And I could afford it so poorly. Since then Carinthia has filled my days. I shudder to leave you and think of your going back to the English. Their sneer withers. They sent you down among us as a young woman to be shunned.'

'I did wildly, I was ungoverned, I had one idea,' said Carinthia. *One idea is a bullet, good for the day of battle to beat the foe*, father tells us. It was a madness in me. Now it has gone, I see all round. I see straight, too. With one idea, we see nothing—nothing but itself. Whizz! we go. I did. I shall no longer offend in that way. Mr. Gower Woodseer is here from my lord.'

'With him the child will be safe.'

'I am not alarmed. It is to request—they would have me gone, to prepare the way for my lord.'

'You have done it; he has the castle to himself. I cannot spare you. A tyrant ordering you to go should be defied. My Lord Fleetwood puts lightning into my slow veins.'

'We have talked: we shall be reproved by the husband and the doctor,' said Carinthia.

Sullen days continued and rolled over to night at the mines. Gower's mission was rendered absurd by the countess's withdrawal from the castle. He spoke of it to Mr. Wythan once, and the latter took a big breath and blew such a lord to the winds. 'Persuade our guest to leave us, that the air may not be tainted for her husband when he comes? He needn't call; he 's not obliged to see her. She 's offered Esslemont to live in? I believe her instinct 's right—he has designs on

the child. A little more and we shall have a mad dog in the fellow. He doubles my work by keeping his men out. If she were away we should hear of black doings. Twenty dozen of his pugilists wouldn't stop the burning.'

They agreed that persuasions need not be addressed to the countess. She was and would remain Mr. Wythan's guest. As for the earl, Gower inclined to plead hesitatingly, still to plead, on behalf a nobleman owning his influence and very susceptible to his wisdom, whose echo of a pointed saying nearly equalled the satisfaction bestowed by print. The titled man affected the philosopher in that manner; or rather, the crude philosopher's relish of brilliant appreciation stripped him of his robe. For he was with Owain Wythan at heart to scorn titles which did not distinguish practical offices. A nation bowing to them has gone to pith, for him; he had to shake himself, that he might not similarly stick; he had to do it often. Objects elevated even by a decayed world have their magnetism for us unless we nerve the mind to wakeful repulsion. He protested he had reason to think the earl was humanizing, though he might be killing a woman in the process. 'Could she wish for better?' he asked, with at least the gravity of the undermining humorist; and he started Owain to course an idea when he remarked of Lord Fleetwood: 'Imagine a devil on his back on a river, flying a cherub.'

Owain sparkled from the vision of the thing to wrath with it.

'Ay, but while he's floating, his people are edging on starvation. And I've a personal grievance. I keep, you know, open hall, bread and cheese and beer, for

poor mates. His men are favouring us with a call. We have to cart treble from the town. If I straighten the sticks he tries to bend, it 'll be a grievance against me—and a fig for it! But I like to be at peace with my neighbours, and waft them *penillion* instead of dealing the *cleddyfal* of Llewellyn.'

At last the tension ceased; they had intelligence of the earl's arrival.

His countess was little moved by it; and the reason for that lay in her imagination being absorbed. Henrietta had posted her a journal telling of a deed of Chillon's: no great feat, but precious for its 'likeness to him,' as they phrased it; that is, for the light it cast on their conception of the man. Heading a squadron in a riotous Midland town, he stopped a charge, after fire of a shot from the mob, and galloped up the street to catch a staggering urchin to his saddle-bow, and place the mite in safety. Then it was a simple trot of the hussars ahead; way was made for him.

Now, to see what banquet there is for the big of heart in the world's hot stress, take the view of Carinthia, to whom her brother's thoughtful little act of gentleness at the moment of the red-of-the-powder smoke was divinest bread and wine, when calamity hung around, with the future an unfooted wilderness, her powers untried, her husband her enemy.

## CHAPTER XXXI

### WE HAVE AGAIN TO DEAL WITH THE EXAMPLES OF OUR YOUNGER MAN

The most urgent of Dames is working herself up to a grey squall in her detestation of imagerial epigrams. Otherwise Gower Woodseer's dash at the quintessential young man of wealth would prompt to the carrying of it further, and telling how the tethered flutterer above a 'devil on his back on a river' was beginning to pull if not drag his withholder and teaser.

Fleetwood had almost a desire to see the small dot of humanity which drew the breath from him;—and was indistinguishably the bubbly grin and gurgle of the nurses, he could swear. He kicked at the bondage to our common fleshly nature imposed on him by the mother of the little animal. But there had been a mother to this father: odd movements of a warmish curiosity brushed him when the cynic was not mounting guard. They were, it seemed, external—no part of him: like blasts of a wayside furnace across wintry air. They were, as it chanced, Nature's woman in him plucking at her separated partner, Custom's man; something of an oriental voluptuary on his isolated regal seat; and he would suck the pleasures without a descent into the stale old ruts where Life's convict couple walk linked to one another, to their issue more.

There was also a cold curiosity to see the male infant such a mother would have. The grandson of Old Lawless might turn out a rascal,—he would be no mean one, no coward.

That mother, too, who must have been a touch astonished to find herself a mother:—Fleetwood laughed a curt bark, and heard rebukes, and pleaded the marriage-trap to the man of his word; devil and cherub were at the tug, or say, dog and gentleman, a survival of the schoolboy:—that mother, a girl of the mountains, perhaps wanted no more than smoothing by the world. 'It is my husband' sounded foolish, sounded freshish,—a new note. Would she repeat it? The bit of simplicity would bear repeating once. Gower Woodseer says the creature grows and studies to perfect herself. She's a good way off that, and may spoil herself in the process; but she has a certain power. Her donkey obstinacy in refusing compliance, and her pursuit of 'my husband,' and ability to drench him with ridicule, do not exhibit the ordinary young female. She stamps her impression on the people she meets. Her husband is shaken to confess it likewise, despite a disagreement between them.

He has owned he is her husband: he has not disavowed the consequence. That fellow, Gower Woodseer, might accuse the husband of virtually lying, if he by his conduct implied her distastefulness or worse. By heaven! as felon a deed as could be done. Argue the case anyhow, it should be undone. Let her but cease to madden. For whatever the rawness of the woman, she has qualities; and experience of the facile loves of London very sharply defines her qualities. Think of her as raw, she has the gift of rareness: forget the donkey obstinacy, her character grasps. In the grasp of her character, one inclines, and her husband inclines, to become her advocate. She has only to discontinue maddening.

The wealthy young noble prized any form of rareness wherever it was visible, having no thought of the purchase of it, except with worship. He could listen pleased to the talk of a Methodist minister sewing boot-leather. He picked up a roadside tramp and made a friend of him, and valued the fellow's honesty, submitted to his lectures, pardoned his insolence. The sight of Carinthia's narrow bedroom and strip of bed over Sarah Winch's Whitechapel shop had gone a step to drown the bobbing Whitechapel Countess. At least, he had not been hunted by that gaunt chalk-quarry ghost since his peep into the room. Own it! she likewise has things to forgive. Women nurse their larvæ of ideas about fair dealing. But observe the distinction: and if women understood justice they would be the first to proclaim, that when two are tied together, the one who does the other serious injury is more naturally excused than the one who—tenfold abhorrent if a woman!—calls up the grotesque to extinguish both.

With this apology for himself, Lord Fleetwood grew tolerant of the person honourably avowed as his wife. So, therefore, the barrier between him and his thoughts of her was broken. The thoughts carrying red roses were selected. Finally, the taste to meet her sprouted. If agreeable, she could be wooed; if barely agreeable, tormented; if disagreeable, left as before.

Although it was the hazard of a die, he decided to follow his taste. Her stay at the castle had kept him long from the duties of his business; and he could imagine it a grievance if he pleased, but he put it aside.

Alighting at his chief manager's office, he passed

through the heated atmosphere of black-browed, wiry little rebels, who withheld the salute as they lounged: a posture often preceding the spring in compulsorily idle workers. He was aware of instinct abroad, an antagonism to the proprietor's rights. They roused him to stand by them, and were his own form of instinct, handsomely clothed. It behoved that he should examine them and the claims against them, to be sure of his ground. He and Mr. Howell Edwards debated the dispute for an hour; agreeing, partially differing. There was a weakness on the principle in Edwards. These fellows fixed to the spot are for compromise too much. An owner of mines has no steady reckoning of income if the rate of wage is perpetually to shift according to current, mostly ignorant, versions of the prosperity of the times. Are we so prosperous? It is far from certain. And if the rate ascends, the question of easing it down to suit the discontinuance of prosperity agitating our exchequer—whose demand is for fixity—perplexes us further.

However, that was preliminary. He and Howell Edwards would dine and wrangle it out. The earl knew himself a hot disputant after dinner. Incidentally he heard of Lady Fleetwood as a guest of Mrs. Wythan; and the circumstance was injurious to him because he stood against Mr. Wythan's pampering system with his men.

Ines up at the castle smelt of beer, and his eyelids were sottish. Nothing to do tries the virtue of the best. He sought his excuse in a heavy lamentation over my lady's unjust suspicion of him,—a known man of honour, though he did serve his paytron.

The cause of Lady Fleetwood's absence was exposed

to her outraged lord, who had sent the man purely to protect her at this castle, where she insisted on staying. The suspicion cast on the dreary lusher was the wife's wild shot at her husband. One could understand a silly woman's passing terror. Her acting under the dictate of it struck the husband's ribbed breast as a positive clap of hostilities between them across a chasm.

His previous placable mood was immediately conceived by him to have been one of his fits of generosity; a step to a frightful, dutiful embrace of an almost repulsive object. He flung the thought of her back on her Whitechapel. She returned from that place with smiles, dressed in a laundry white with a sprinkle of smuts, appearing to him as an adversary armed and able to strike. There was a blow, for he chewed resentments; and these were goaded by a remembered shyness of meeting her eyes when he rounded up the slope of the hill, in view of his castle, where he supposed she would be awaiting 'my husband.' The silence of her absence was lively mockery of that anticipation.

Gower came on him sauntering about the grounds.

'You're not very successful down here,' Fleetwood said, without greeting.

'The countess likes the air of this country,' said Gower, evasively, impertinently, and pointlessly; offensively to the despot employing him to be either subservient or smart.

'I wish her to leave it.'

'She wishes to see you first.'

'She takes queer measures. I start to-morrow for my yacht at Cardiff.'

There the matter ended; for Fleetwood fell to talking of the mines. At dinner and after dinner

it was the topic, and after Howell Edwards had departed.

When the man who has a heart will talk of nothing but what concerns his interests, and the heart is hurt, it may be perceived by a cognizant friend, that this is his proud, mute way of petitioning to have the tenderer subject broached. Gower was sure of the heart, armoured or bandaged though it was,—a haunt of evil spirits as well,—and he began: 'Now to speak of me half a minute. You cajoled me out of my Surrey room, where I was writing, in the vein. . . .'

'I 've had the scene before me!' the earl interposed. 'Juniper dells and that tree of the flashing leaf, and that dear old boy, your father, young as you and me, and saying love of Nature gives us eternal youth. On with you.'

'I doubted whether I should be of use to you. I told you the amount of alloy in my motives. A year with you, I have subsistence for ten years assured to me.'

'Don't be a prosy dog, Gower Woodseer.'

'Will you come over to the Wythans before you go?'

'I will not.'

'You would lengthen your stride across a wounded beast?'

'I see no wound to the beast.'

'You can permit yourself to kick under cover of a metaphor.'

'Tell me what you drive at, Gower.'

'The request is, for you to spare pain by taking one step—an extra strain on the muscles of the leg. It 's only the leg wants moving.'

'The lady has legs to run away, let them bring her back.'

'Why have me with you, then? I'm useless. But you read us all, see everything, and wait only for the mood to do the right. You read me, and I'm not open to everybody. You read the crux of a man like me in my novel position. You read my admiration of a beautiful woman and effort to keep honest. You read my downright preference of what most people would call poverty, and my enjoyment of good cookery and good company. You enlist among the crew below as one of our tempters. You find I come round to the thing I like best. Therefore, you have your liking for me; and that's why you turn to me again, after your natural infidelities. So much for me. You read this priceless lady quite as clearly. You choose to cloud her with your moods. She was at a disadvantage, arriving in a strange country, next to friendless; and each new incident bred of a luckless beginning—I could say more.'

Fleetwood nodded. 'You are read without the words. You read in history, too, I suppose, that there are two sides to most cases. The loudest is not often the strongest. However, now the lady shows herself crazed. That's reading her charitably. Else she has to be taken for a spiteful shrew, who pretends to suspect anything that's villanous, because she can hit on no other way of striking.'

'Crazed, is a wide shot and hits half the world,' muttered Gower. 'Lady Fleetwood had a troubled period after her marriage. She suffered a sort of kidnapping when she was bearing her child. There's a book by an Edinburgh doctor might be serviceable to you. It enlightens me. She will have a distrust of you, as regards the child, until she understands you by living with you under one roof.'

'Such animals these women are! Good Lord!' Fleetwood ejaculated. 'I marry one, and I'm to take to reading medical books!' He yawned.

'You speak that of women and pretend to love Nature,' said Gower. 'You hate Nature unless you have it served on a dish by your own cook. That's the way to the madhouse or the monastery. There we expiate the sin of sins. A man finds the woman of all women fitted to stick him in the soil, and trim and point him to grow, and she's an animal for her pains! The secret of your malady is, you've not yet, though you're on a healthy leap for the practices of Nature, hopped to the primary conception of what Nature means. Women are in and of Nature. I've studied them here—had nothing to do but study them. That most noble of ladies' whole mind was knotted to preserve her child during her time of endurance up to her moment of trial. Think it over. It's your one chance of keeping sane. And expect to hear flat stuff from me while you go on playing tyrant.'

'You certainly take liberties,' Fleetwood's mildest voice remarked.

'I told you I should try you, when you plucked me out of my Surrey nest.'

Fleetwood passed from a meditative look to a malicious half-laugh. 'You seem to have studied the 'most noble of ladies' latterly rather like a barrister with a brief for the defendant—plaintiff, if you like!'

'As to that, I'll help you to an insight of a particular weakness of mine,' said Gower. 'I require to have persons of even the highest value presented to me on a stage, or else I don't grasp them at all—they're simply pictures. I saw the lady; admired, esteemed,

sufficiently, I supposed, until her image appeared to me in the feelings of another. Then I saw fathoms. No doubt, it was from feeling warmer. I went through the blood of the other for my impression.'

'Name the other,' said the earl, and his features were sharp.

'You can have the name,' Gower answered. 'It was the girl, Madge Winch.'

Fleetwood's hard stare melted to surprise and contemptuous amusement. 'You see the lady to be the "most noble of ladies" through the warming you get by passing into the feelings of Madge Winch?'

Sarcasm was in the tone, and beneath it a thrill of compassionateness traversed him and shot a remorseful sting with the vision of those two young women on the coach at the scene of the fight. He had sentience of their voices, nigh to hearing them. The forlorn bride's hand given to the anxious girl behind her flashed an image of the sisterhood binding women under the pangs they suffer from men. He craved a scourging that he might not be cursing himself; and he provoked it, for Gower was very sensitive to a cold breath on the weakness he had laid bare; and when Fleetwood said: 'You recommend a bath in the feelings of Madge Winch?' the retort came: 'It might stop you on the road to a cowl.'

Fleetwood put on the mask of cogitation to cover a shudder, 'How?'

'A question of the man or the monk with you, as I fancy I've told you more than once!'

'You may fancy committing any impertinence and be not much out.'

'The saving of you is that you digest it when you've stewed it down.'

'You try me!'

'I don't impose the connection.'

'No, I take the blame for that.'

They sat in dumbness, fidgeted, sprang to their feet, and lighted bedroom candles.

Mounting the stairs, Gower was moved to let fall a benevolent look on the worried son of fortune. 'I warned you I should try you. It ought to be done politely. If I have to speak a truth I 'm boorish. The divinely damnable naked truth won't wear ornaments. It 's about the same as pitching a handful of earth.'

'You dirt your hands, hit or miss. Out of this corridor! Into my room, and spout your worst,' cried the earl.

Gower entered his dressing-room and was bidden to smoke there.

'You 're a milder boor when you smoke. That day down in Surrey with the grand old bootmaker was one of our days, Gower Woodseer! There 's no smell of the boor in him. Perhaps his religion helps him, more than Nature-worship: not the best for manners. You won't smoke your pipe?—a cigar? Lay on, then, as hard as you like.'

'You 're asking for the debauchee's last luxury—not a correction,' said Gower, grimly thinking of how his whip might prove effective and punish the man who kept him fruitlessly out of his bed.

'I want stuff for a place in the memory,' said Fleetwood; and the late hour, with the profitless talk, made it a stinging taunt.

'You want me to flick your indecision.'

'That 's half a hit.'

'I'm to talk italics, for you to store a smart word or so.'

'True, I swear! And, please, begin.'

'You hang for the Fates to settle which is to be smothered in you, the man or the lord—and it ends in the monk, if you hang much longer.'

'A bit of a scorpion in his intention,' Fleetwood muttered on a stride. 'I'll tell you this, Gower Woodseer; when you lay on in earnest, your diction is not so choice. Do any of your remarks apply to Lady Fleetwood?'

'All should. I don't presume to allude to Lady Fleetwood.'

'She has not charged you to complain?'

'Lady Fleetwood is not the person to complain or condescend to speak of injuries.'

'She insults me with her insane suspicion.'

A swollen vein on the young nobleman's forehead went to confirm the idea at the Wythans that he was capable of mischief. They were right; he was as capable of villany as of nobility. But he happened to be thanking Gower Woodseer's whip for the comfortable numbness he felt at Carinthia's behaviour, while detesting her for causing him to desire it and endure it, and exonerate his prosy castigator.

He was ignorant of the revenge he had on Gower, whose diction had not been particularly estimable. In the feebleness of a man vainly courting sleep, the disarmed philosopher tossed from one side to the other through the remaining hours of darkness, polishing sentences that were natural spouts of choicest diction; and still the earl's virulent small sneer rankled. He understood why, after a time. The fervour of ad-

vocacy, which inspires high diction, had been wanting. He had sought more to lash the earl with his personal disgust—and partly to parade his contempt of a lucrative dependency—than he had felt for the countess. No wonder his diction was poor. It was a sample of limp thinness; a sort of tongue of a Master Slender: —flavourless, unsatisfactory, considering its object: measured to be condemned by its poor achievement. He had nevertheless a heart to feel for the dear lady, and heat the pleading for her, especially when it ran to its object, as along a shaft of the sun-rays, from the passionate devotedness of that girl Madge.

He brooded over it till it was like a fire beneath him to drive him from his bed and across the turfy roller of the hill to the Wythans', in the front of an autumnal sunrise—grand where the country is shorn of surface decoration, as here and there we find some unadorned human creature, whose bosom bears the ball of warmth.

## CHAPTER XXXII

### IN WHICH WE SEE CARINTHIA PUT IN PRACTICE ONE OF HER OLD FATHER'S LESSONS

Seated at his breakfast-table, the earl saw Gower stride in, and could have wagered he knew the destination of the fellow's morning walk. It concerned him little; he would be leaving the castle in less than an hour. She might choose to come or choose to keep away. The whims of animals do not affect men unless

they are professionally tamers. Petty domestic dissensions are besides poor webs to the man pulling single-handed at ropes with his revolted miners. On the topic of wages, too, he was Gower's master, and could hold forth: by which he taught himself to feel that practical affairs are the proper business of men, women and infants being remotely secondary; the picturesque and poetry, consequently, sheer nonsense.

'I suppose your waiting here is useless, to quote you,' he said. 'The countess can decide now to remain, if she pleases. Drive with me to Cardiff—I miss you if you're absent a week. Or is it legs? Drop me a line of your stages on the road, and don't loiter much.'

Gower spoke of starting his legs next day, if he had to do the journey alone: and he clouded the yacht for Fleetwood with talk of the Wye and the Usk, Hereford and the Malvern Hills elliptical over the plains.

'Yes,' the earl acquiesced jealously; 'we ought to have seen—tramped every foot of our own country. That yacht of mine, there she is, and I said I would board her and have a fly with half a dozen fellows round the Scottish isles. We're never free to do as we like.'

'Legs are the only things that have a taste of freedom,' said Gower.

They strolled down to Howell Edwards' office at nine, Kit Ines beside the luggage cart to the rear.

Around the office and along to the street of the cottages crowds were chattering, gesticulating; Ines fancied the foreign jabberers inclined to threaten. Howell Edwards at the door of his office watched them calculatingly. The lord of their destinies passed

in with him, leaving Gower to study the features of the men, and Ines to reckon the chance of a fray.

Fleetwood came out presently, saying to Edwards: 'That concession goes far enough. Because I have a neighbour who yields at every step? No, stick to the principle. I've said my final word. And here's the carriage. If the mines are closed, more's the pity: but I'm not responsible. You can let them know if you like, before I drive off; it doesn't matter to me.'

The carriage was ready. Gower cast a glance up the hill. Three female figures and a pannier-donkey were visible on the descent. He nodded to Edwards, who took the words out of his mouth. 'Her ladyship, my lord.'

She was distinctly seen, and looked formidable in definition against the cloud. Madge and the nurse-maid Martha were the two other young women. On they came, and the angry man seated in the carriage could not give the order to start. Nor could he quite shape an idea of annoyance, though he hung to it and faced at Gower a battery of the promise to pay him for this. Tattling observers were estimated at their small importance there, as everywhere, by one so high above them. But the appearance of the woman of the burlesque name and burlesque actions, and odd ascension out of the ludicrous into a form to cast a spell, so that she commanded serious recollections of her, disturbed him. He stepped from his carriage. Again he had his incomprehensible fit of shyness; and a vision of the complacent, jowled, redundant, blue-coated monarch aswing in imbecile merriment on the signboard of the Royal Sovereign inn; constitutionally his total opposite, yet instigating the sensation.

In that respect his countess and he had shifted characters. Carinthia came on at her bold mountain stride to within hail of him. Met by Gower, she talked, smiled, patted her donkey, clutched his ear, lifted a silken covering to show the child asleep; entirely at her ease and unhurried. These women get an aid from their pride of maternity. And when they can boast a parson behind them, they are indecorous up to insolent in their ostentation of it.

She resumed her advance, with a slight abatement of her challenging match, sedately; very collectedly erect; changed in the fulness of her figure and her poised, calm bearing.

He heard her voice addressing Gower: 'Yes, they do; we noticed the slate-roofs, looking down on them. They do look like a council of rooks in the hollow; a parliament, you said. They look exceedingly like, when a peep of sunshine falls. Oh, no, not clergymen!'

She laughed at the suggestion.

She might be one of the actresses by nature.

Is the man unsympathetic with women a hater of Nature deductively? Most women are actresses. As to worshipping Nature, we go back to the state of heathen beast, Mr. Philosopher Gower could be answered. . . .

Fleetwood drew in his argument. She stood before him. There was on his part an insular representation of old French Court salute to the lady, and she replied to it in the exactest measure, as if an instructed proficient.

She stood unshadowed. 'We have come to bid you adieu, my lord,' she said, and no trouble of the bosom shook her mellow tones. Her face was not the

chalk-quarry or the rosed rock; it was oddly individual, and, in a way, alluring, with some gentle contraction of her eyelids. But evidently she stood in full repose, mistress of herself.

Upon him, it appeared, the whole sensibilty of the situation was to be thrown. He hardened.

'We have had to settle business here,' he said, speaking resonantly, to cover his gazing discomposedly, all but furtively.

The child was shown, still asleep. A cunning infant: not a cry in him to excuse a father for preferring concord or silence or the bachelor's exemption.

'He is a strong boy,' the mother said. 'Our doctor promises he will ride over all the illnesses.'

Fleetwood's answer set off with an alarum of the throat, and dwindled to 'We'll hope so. Seems to sleep well.'

She had her rocky brows. They were not barren crags, and her shape was Nature's ripeness, it was acknowledged. She stood like a lance in air—rather like an Amazon schooled by Athene, one might imagine. Hues of some going or coming flush hinted the magical trick of her visage. She spoke in modest manner, or it might be indifferently, without a flaunting of either.

'I wish to consult you, my lord. He is not baptized. His Christian names?'

'I have no choice.'

'I should wish him to bear one of my brother's names.'

'I have no knowledge of your brother's names.'

'Chillon is one.'

'Ah! Is it, should you think, suitable to our climate?'

'Another name of my brother's is John.'

'Bull.' The loutish derision passed her and rebounded on him. 'That would be quite at home.'

'You will allow one of your own names, my lord?'

'Oh, certainly, if you desire it, choose. There are four names you will find in a book of the Peerage or Directory or so. Up at the castle—or you might have written :—better than these questions on the public road. I don't demur. Let it be as you like.'

'I write empty letters to tell what I much want,' Carinthia said.

'You have only to write your plain request.'

'If, now I see you, I may speak another request, my lord.'

'Pray,' he said, with courteous patience, and stepped forward down to the street of the miners' cottages. She could there speak out—bawl the request, if it suited her to do so.

On the point of speaking, she gazed round.

'Perfectly safe! no harm possible,' said he, fretful under the burden of this her maniacal maternal anxiety.

'The men are all right, they would not hurt a child. What can rationally be suspected!'

'I know the men; they love their children,' she replied. 'I think my child would be precious to them. Mr. Woodseer and Mr. Edwards and Madge are there.'

'Is the one more request—I mean, a mother's anxiety does not run to the extent of suspecting everybody?'

'Some of the children are very pretty,' said Carinthia, and eyed the bands of them at their games in the roadway and at the cottage doors. 'Children of the poor have happy mothers.'

Her eyes were homely, though they were so much a morning over her face. They were open now to what that fellow Woodseer (who could speak to the point when he was not aiming at it) called the parlour, or social sitting-room; where we may have converse with the tame woman's mind, seeing the door to the clawing recesses temporarily shut.

'Forgive me if I say you talk like the bigger child,' Fleetwood said lightly, not ungenially; for the features he looked on were museful, a picture in their one expression.

Her answer chilled him. 'It is true, my lord. I will not detain you. I would beg to be supplied with money.'

He was like the leaves of a frosted plant, in his crisp curling inward:—he had been so genial.

'You have come to say good-bye, that you may have an opportunity to—as you put it—beg for money. I am not sure of your having learnt yet the right disposal of money.'

'I beg, my lord, to have two thousand pounds a year allowed me.'

'Ten—and it's a task to spend the sum on a single household—shall be allotted to your expenditure at Esslemont;—stables, bills, et cætera. You can entertain. My steward Leddings will undertake the management. You will not be troubled with payings.'

Her head acknowledged the graciousness. 'I would have two thousand pounds and live where I please.'

'Pardon me: the two, for a lady living where she pleases, exceeds the required amount.'

'I will accept a smaller sum, my lord.'

'Money!—it seems a singular demand when all supplies are furnished.'

'I would have control of some money.'

'You are thinking of charities.'

'Not charities.'

'Edwards here has a provision for the hospital needs of the people. Mr. Woodseer applies to me in cases he can certify. Leddings will do the same at Esslemont.'

'I am glad, I am thankful. The money I would have is for my own use. It is for me.'

'Ah. Scarcely that, I fancy.'

The remark should have struck home. He had a thirst for the sign of her confessing to it. He looked. Something like a petrifaction of her wildest face was shown.

Carinthia's eyes were hard out on a scattered knot of children down the street.

She gathered up her skirts. Without a word to him, she ran, and running shouted to the little ones around and ahead: 'In! in! indoors, children! *Blant, i'r ty!* Mothers, mothers, ho! get them in. See the dog! *Ci! Ci!* In with them! *Blant, i'r ty! i'r ty!*'

A big black mongrel appeared worrying at one of two petticoated urchins on the ground.

She scurried her swiftest, with such warning Welsh as she had on the top of her mountain cry; and doors flew wide, there was a bang of doors when she darted by: first gust of terrible heavens that she seemed to the cottagers.

Other shouts behind her rent the air, gathering to a roar, from the breasts of men and women. 'Mad dog about' had been for days the rumour, crossing the hills over the line of village, hamlet, farm, from Cardiff port.

Dead hush succeeded the burst. Men and women stood off. The brute was at the lady.

Her arms were straight above her head; her figure overhanging, on a bend of the knees. Right and left, the fury of the slavering fangs shook her loose droop of gown; and a dull, prolonged growl, like the clamour of a far body of insurrectionary marching men, told of the rage.

Fleetwood hovered helpless as a leaf on a bough.

'Back, I pray,' she said to him, and motioned it, her arms at high stretch.

He held no weapon. The sweat of his forehead half blinded him. And she waved him behind her, beckoned to the crowd to keep wide way, used her lifted hands as flappers; she had all her wits. There was not a wrinkle of a grimace. Nothing but her locked lips betrayed her vision of imminent doom. The shaking of her gown and the snarl in the undergrowl sounded insatiate.

The brute dropped hold. With a weariful jog of the head, it pursued its course at an awful even swinging pace: Death's own, Death's doer, his reaper,—he, the very Death of the Terrors.

Carinthia's cry rang for clear way to be kept on either side, and that accursed went the path through a sharp-edged mob, as it poured pell-mell and shrank back, closing for the chase to rear of it.

'Father taught me,' she said to the earl, not more discomposed than if she had taken a jump.

'It 's over!' he groaned, savagely white, and bellowed for guns, any weapons. 'Your father? pray?' She was entreated to speak.

'Yes, it must be shot; it will be merciful to kill it,'

she said. 'They have carried the child indoors. The others are safe. Mr. Woodseer, run to my nurse-girl, Martha. He goes,' she murmured, and resumed to the earl: 'Father told me women have a better chance than men with a biting dog. He put me before him and drilled me. He thought of everything. Usually the poor beast snaps—one angry bite, not more. My dress teased it.'

Fleetweed grinned civilly in his excitement; intending to yield patient hearing, to be interested by any mortal thing she might choose to say.

She was advised by recollection to let her father rest.

'No, dear girl, not hurt, no scratch,—only my gown torn,' she said to Madge; and Madge heaved and whimpered, and stooped to pin the frayed strips. 'Quite safe; you see it is easy for women to escape, Mr. Edwards.'

Carinthia's voice hummed over the girl's head: 'Father made me practise it, in case. He forethought. Madge, you heard of this dog. I told you how to act. I was not feverish. Our babe will not feel it.'

She bade Madge open her hands. 'A scratch would kill. Never mind the tearings; I will hold my dress. Oh! there is that one child bitten. Mr. Edwards, mount a man for the doctor. I will go in to the child. He was bitten. Lose not one minute, Mr. Edwards. I see you go.'

He bowed and hastened.

The child's mother was red eyes at her door for ease of her heart to the lady. Carinthia stepped into the room, where the little creature was fetching sobs after the spout of screams.

'God in heaven! she can't be going to suck the

bite?' Fleetwood cried to Madge, whose answer was disquieting: 'If it's to save life, my mistress won't stop at anything.'

His heart sprang with a lighted comprehension of Gower Woodseer's meaning. This girl's fervour opened portals to new views of her mistress, or opened eyes.

## CHAPTER XXXIII

### A FRIGHTFUL DEBATE

Pushing through a swarm into the cot, Fleetwood saw Carinthia on a knee beside a girl's lap, where the stripped child lay. Its mother held a basin for the dabbing at raw red spots.

A sting of pain touched the memory of its fright, and brought further screams, then the sobs. Carinthia hummed a Styrian cradle-song as the wailing lulled.

She glanced up; she said to the earl: 'The bite was deep; it was in the blood. We may have time. Get me an interpreter. I must ask the mother. I know not many words.'

'What now?' said he, at the looming of new vexations.

'We have no choice. Has a man gone? Dr. Griffiths would hurry fast. An hour may be too late. The poison travels. Father advised it:—*Fifty years for one brave minute!* This child should be helped to live.'

'We'll do our best. Why an interpreter?'

'A poker in the fire. The interpreter—whether the mother will bear to have it done.'

'Burn, do you mean?'

'It should be burnt.'

'Not by you?'

'Quick! Quick!'

'But will you—could you? No, I say!'

'If there is no one else.'

'You forget your own child.'

'He is near the end of his mother.'

'The doctor will soon arrive.'

'The poison travels. It cannot be overtaken unless we start nearly equal, father said.'

'Work like that wants an experienced hand.'

'A steady one. I would not quake—not tremble.'

'I cannot permit it.'

'Mr. Wythan would know!—he would know!'

'Do you hear, Lady Fleetwood—the dog may not be mad!'

'Signs! He ran heavy, he foamed.'

'Foam 's no sign.'

'Go; order to me a speaker of English and Welsh.'

The earl spun round, sensible of the novelty of his being commanded, and submitting; but no sooner had he turned than he fell into her view of the urgency, and he went, much like the boy we see at school, with a strong hand on his collar running him in.

Madge entered, and said: 'Mr. Woodseer has seen baby and Martha and the donkey all safe.'

'He is kind,' said Carinthia. 'Do we right to bathe the wound? It seems right to wash it. Little things that seem right may be exactly wrong after all,

when we are ignorant. I know burning the wound is right.'

Madge asked: 'But, my lady, who is to do it?'

'You would do it, dear, if I shrank,' her mistress replied.

'Oh, my lady, I don't know, I can't say. Burning a child! And there 's our baby.'

'He has had me nearly his time.'

'Oh, my dear lady! Would the mother consent?'

'My Madge! I have so few of their words yet. You would hold the child to save it from a dreadful end.'

'God help me, my lady—I would, as long as I live I will. . . . Oh! poor infant, we do need our courage now.'

Seeing that her mistress had not a tear or a tremor, the girl blinked and schooled her quailing heart, still under the wicked hope that the mother would not consent; in a wonderment at this lady, who was womanly, and who could hold the red iron at living flesh, to save the poor infant from a dreadful end. Her flow of love to this dear lady felt the slicing of a cut; was half revulsion, half worship; uttermost worship in estrangement, with the further throbbing of her pulses.

The cottage door was pushed open for Lord Fleetwood and Howell Edwards, whom his master had prepared to stand against immediate operations. A mounted messenger had been despatched. But it was true, the doctor might not be at home. Assuming it to be a bite of rabies, minutes lost meant the terrible: Edwards bowed his head to that. On the other hand, he foresaw the closest of personal reasons for hesitating to be in agreement with the lady wholly. The countess was

not so much a persuasive lady as she was, in her breath and gaze, a sweeping and a wafting power. After a short argument, he had a sense of hanging like a bank detached to fatality of motion by the crack of a landslip, and that he would speedily be on his manhood to volunteer for the terrible work.

He addressed the mother. Her eyes whitened from their red at his first word of laying hot iron on the child: she ran out with the wild woman's howl to her neighbours.

'Poor mother!' Carinthia sighed. 'It may last a year in the child's body, and one day he shudders at water. Father saw a bitten man die. I could fear death with the thought of that poison in me. I pray Dr. Griffiths may come.'

Fleetwood shuffled a step. 'He will come, he will come.'

The mother and some women now packed the room. A gabble arose between them and Edwards. They fired sharp snatches of speech, and they darted looks at the lady and her lord.

'They do not know!' said Carinthia.

Gower brought her news that the dog had been killed; Martha and her precious burden were outside, a mob of men, too. He was not alarmed; but she went to the door and took her babe in her arms, and when the women observed the lady holding her own little one, their looks were softened. At a hint of explanation from Edwards, the guttural gabble rattled up to the shrill vowels.

Fleetwood's endurance broke short. The packed small room, the caged-monkey lingo, the wailful child, and the past and apprehended debate upon the burning

of flesh, composed an intolerable torture. He said to Edwards: 'Go to the men; settle it with them. We have to follow that man Wythan; no peace otherwise. Tell the men the body of the dog must be secured for analysis. Mad or not, it's the same. These Welsh mothers and grandmothers won't allow cautery at any price. Hark at them!'

He turned to Carinthia: 'Your ladyship will let Mr. Edwards or Mr. Woodseer conduct you to the house where you are residing. You don't know these excitable people. I wish you to leave.'

She replied softly: 'I stay for the doctor's coming.'

'Impossible for me to wait, and I can't permit you to be here.'

'It is life and death, and I must not be commanded.'

'You may be proposing gratuitous agony.'

'I would do it to my own child.'

The earl attacked Gower: 'Add your voice to persuade Lady Fleetwood.'

Gower said: 'What if I think with Lady Fleetwood?'

'You would see her do it?'

'Do it myself, if there was no one else.'

'This dog—all of you have gone mad,' the earl cried. 'Griffiths may keep his head; it's the only chance. Take my word, these Welshwomen—just listen to them—won't have it. You'll find yourself in a nest of Furies. It may be right to do, it's folly to propose it, madness to attempt it. And I shall be bitten if I stop here a minute longer; I'm gone; I can neither command nor influence. I should have thought Gower Woodseer would have kept his wits.'

Fleetwood's look fell on Madge amid the group.

Gower's perception of her mistress through the girl's devotion to her moved him. He took Madge by the hand, and the sensation came that it was the next thing to pressing his wife's. 'You're a loyal girl. You have a mistress it 's an honour to serve. You bind me. By the way, Ines shall run down for a minute before I go.'

'Let him stay where he is,' Madge said, having bobbed her curtsy.

'Oh, if he 's not to get a welcome!' said the earl; and he could now fix a steadier look on his countess, who would have animated him with either a hostile face or a tender. She had no expression of a feeling. He bent to her formally.

Carinthia's words were: 'Adieu, my lord.'

'I have only to say, that Esslemont is ready to receive you,' he remarked, bowed more curtly, and walked out.

Gower followed him. They might as well have been silent, for any effect from what was uttered between them. They spoke opinions held by each of them—adverse mainly; speaking for no other purpose than to hold their positions.

'Oh, she has courage, no doubt; no one doubted it,' Fleetwood said, out of all relation to the foregoing.

Courage to grapple with his pride and open his heart was wanting in him.

Had that been done, even to the hint of it, instead of the lordly indifference shown, Gower might have ventured on a suggestion, that the priceless woman he could call wife was fast slipping away from him and withering in her allegiance. He did allude to his personal sentiment. 'One takes aim at Philosophy;

Lady Fleetwood pulls us up to pay tribute to our debts.' But this was vague, and his hearer needed a present thunder and lightning to shake and pierce him.

'I pledged myself to that yacht,' said Fleetwood, by way of reply, 'or you and I would tramp it, as we did once—jolly old days! I shall have you in mind. Now turn back. Do the best you can.'

They parted midway up the street, Gower bearing away a sharp contrast of the earl and his countess; for, until their senses are dulled, impressionable young men, however precociously philosophical, are mastered by appearances; and they have to reflect under new lights before vision of the linked eye and mind is given them.

Fleetwood jumped into his carriage and ordered the coachman to drive smartly. He could not have admitted the feeling small; he felt the having been diminished, and his requiring a rapid transportation from these parts for him to regain his proper stature. Had he misconducted himself at the moment of danger? It is a ghastly thought, that the craven impulse may overcome us. But no, he could reassure his repute for manliness. He had done as much as a man could do in such a situation.

At the same time he had done less than the woman. Needed she to have gone so far? Why precipitate herself into the jaws of the beast?

Now she proposes to burn the child's wound. And she will do it if they let her. One sees her at the work, —pale, flinty; no faces; trebly the terrific woman in her mild way of doing the work. All because her old father recommended it. Because she thinks it a duty, we will say; that is juster. This young woman is a very sword

in the hand of her idea of duty. She can be feminine, too,—there is one who knows. She can be particularly distant, too. If in timidity, she has a modest view of herself—or an enormous conception of the man that married her. Will she take the world's polish a little?

Fleetwood asked with the simplicity of the superior being who will consequently perhaps bestow the debt he owes.

But his was not the surface nature which can put a question of the sort and pass it. As soon as it had been formed, a vision of the elemental creature calling him husband smote to shivers the shell we walk on, and caught him down among the lower forces, up amid the higher; an infernal and a celestial contest for the extinction of the one or the other of them, if it was not for their union. She wrestled with him where the darknesses roll their snake-eyed torrents over between jagged horns of the netherworld. She stood him in the white ray of the primal vital heat, to bear unwithering beside her the test of light. They flew, they chased, battled, embraced, disjoined, adventured apart, brought back the count of their deeds, compared them,—and name the one crushed! It was the one weighted to shame, thrust into the cellar-corner of his own disgust, by his having asked whether that starry warrior spirit in the woman's frame would 'take polish a little.'

Why should it be a contention between them? For this reason: he was reduced to admire her act; and if he admired, he could not admire without respecting; if he respected, perforce he reverenced; if he reverenced, he worshipped. Therefore she had him at her feet. At the feet of any woman, except for the trifling

object! But at the feet of 'It is my husband!' That would be a reversal of things.

Are not things reversed when the name Carinthia sounds in the thought of him who laughed at the name not less angelically martial than Feltre's adored silver trumpets of his papal procession; sweeter of the new morning for the husband of the woman, if he will but consent to the worshipper's posture? Yes, and when Gower Woodseer's 'Malady of the Wealthy,' as he terms the pivotting of the whole marching and wheeling world upon the favoured of Fortune's habits and tastes, promises to quit its fell clutch on him?

Another voice in the young nobleman cried: Pooh, dolt and dupe! and surrounded her for half a league with reek of burnt flesh and shrieks of a tortured child; giving her the aspect of a sister of the Parcæ. But it was not the ascendant voice. It growled underneath, much like the deadly beast at Carinthia's gown while she stood:—an image of her to dominate the princeliest of men!

The princeliest must have won his title to the place before he can yield other than complimentary station to a woman without violation of his dignity; and vast wealth is not the title; worldly honours are not; deeds only are the title. Fleetwood consented to tell himself that he had not yet performed the deeds.

Therefore, for him to be dominated was to be obscured, eclipsed. A man may outrun us; it is the fortune of war. Eclipsed behind the skirts of a woman waving her upraised hands, with, 'Back, pray!'—no, that ignominy is too horribly abominable! Be sure, the situation will certainly recur in some form; will constantly recur. She will usurp the lead; she will play the man.

Let matters go on as they are. We know our personal worth.

Arrived at this point in the perpetual round of the conflict Carinthia had implanted, Fleetwood entered anew the ranks of the ordinary men of wealth and a coronet, and he hugged himself. He enjoyed repose; knowing it might be but a truce. Matters might go on as they were. Still, he wished her away from those Wythans, residing at Esslemont. There she might come eventually to a better knowledge of his personal worth:—'the gold mine we carry in our bosoms till it is threshed out of us in sweat,' that fellow Gower Woodseer says; adding, that we are the richer for not exploring it. Philosophical cynicism is inconclusive. Fleetwood knew his large capacities; he had proved them and could again. In case a certain half foreseen calamity should happen:—imagine it a fact, imagine him seized, besides admiring her character, with a taste for her person! Why, then, he would have to impress his own mysteriously deep character on her portion of understanding. The battle for domination would then begin.

Anticipation of the possibility of it hewed division between the young man's pride of being and his warmer feelings. Had he been free of the dread of subjection, he would have sunk to kiss the feet of the statuesque young woman, arms in air, firm-fronted over the hideous death that tore at her skirts.

## CHAPTER XXXIV

### A SURVEY OF THE RIDE OF THE WELSH CAVALIERS ESCORTING THE COUNTESS OF FLEETWOOD TO KENTISH ESSLEMONT

A FORMAL notification from the earl, addressed to the Countess of Fleetwood in the third person, that Esslemont stood ready to receive her, autocratically concealed her lord's impatience to have her there; and by the careful precision with which the stages of her journey were marked, as places where the servants despatched to convey their lady would find preparations for her comfort, again alarmed the disordered mother's mind on behalf of the child she deemed an object of the father's hatred, second to his hatred of the mother. But the mother could defend herself, the child was prey. The child of a detested wife was heir to his title and estates. His look at the child, his hasty one look down at her innocent, was conjured before her as resembling a kick at a stone in his path. His indifference to the child's Christian names pointed darkly over its future.

The distempered wilfulness of a bruised young woman directed her thoughts. She spoke them in the tone of reason to her invalid friend Rebecca Wythan, who saw with her, felt with her, yearned to retain her till breath was gone. Owain Wythan had his doubts of the tyrant guilty of maltreating this woman of women. 'But when you do leave Wales,' he said, 'you shall be guarded up to your haven.'

Carinthia was not awake to his meaning then. She

sent a short letter of reply, imitating the style of her lord; very baldly stating, that she was unable to leave Wales because of her friend's illness and her part as nurse. Regrets were unmentioned.

Meanwhile Rebecca Wythan was passing to death. Not cheerlessly, more and more faintly, her thread of life ran to pause, resembling a rill of the drought; and the thinner it grew, the shrewder were her murmurs for Carinthia's ears in commending 'the most real of husbands of an unreal wife' to her friendly care of him when he would no longer see the shadow he had wedded. She had the privilege of a soul beyond our minor rules and restrainings to speak her wishes to the true wife of a mock husband—no husband; less a husband than this shadow of a woman a wife, she said; and spoke them without adjuring the bowed head beside her to record a promise or seem to show the far willingness, but merely that the wishes should be heard on earth in her last breath, for a good man's remaining one chance of happiness. On the theme touching her husband Owain, it was verily to hear a soul speak, and have knowledge of the broader range, the rich interflowings of the tuned discords, a spirit past the flesh can find. Her mind was at the same time alive to our worldly conventions when other people came under its light; she sketched them and their views in her brief words between the gasps or heaved on them, with perspicuous, humorous bluntness, as vividly as her twitched eyebrows indicated the laugh. Gower Woodseer she read startlingly, if correctly.

Carinthia could not leave her. Attendance upon this dying woman was a drinking at the springs of life.

Rebecca Wythan under earth, the earl was briefly

informed of Lady Fleetwood's consent to quit Wales,—obedient to a summons two months old,—and that she would be properly escorted; for the which her lord had made provision. Consequently the tyrant swallowed his wrath, little conceiving the monstrous blow she was about to strike.

In peril of fresh floods from our Dame, who should be satisfied with the inspiring of these pages, it is owned that her story of 'the four and twenty squires of Glamorgan and Caermarthen in their brass-buttoned green coats and buckskins, mounted and armed, an escort of the Countess of Fleetwood across the swollen Severn, along midwinter roads, up to the Kentish gates of Esslemont,' has a foundation, though the story is not the more credible for her flourish of documentary old ballad-sheets, printed when London's wags had ears on cock to any whisper of the doings of their favourite Whitechapel Countess; and indeed hardly depended on whispers.

Enthusiasm sufficient to troop forth four and twenty and more hundreds of Cambrian gentlemen, and still more of the common folk, as far as they could journey afoot, was over the two halves of the Principality, to give the countess a reputable and gallant body-guard. London had intimations of kindling circumstances concerning her, and magnified them in the interests of the national humour: which is the English way of exalting to criticize, criticizing to depreciate, and depreciating to restore, ultimately to cherish, in reward for the amusement furnished by an eccentric person, not devoid of merit.

These little tales of her, pricking cool blood to some

activity, were furze-fires among the Welsh. But where the latter heard Bardic strings inviting a chorus, the former as unanimously obeyed the stroke of their humorous conductor's bâton for an outburst from the ribs or below. And it was really funny to hear of Whitechapel's titled heroine roaming Taffyland at her old pranks. Catching a maddened bull by the horns in the market-place, and hanging to the infuriate beast, a wild whirl of clouts, till he is reduced to be a subject for steaks,—that is no common feat.

Her performances down mines were things of the underworld. England clapped hands, merely objecting to her not having changed her garb for the picador's or matador's, before she seized the bull. Wales adopted and was proud of her in any costume. Welshmen North and South, united for the nonce, now propose her gallantry as a theme to the rival Bards at the next Eisteddfod. She is to sit throned in full assembly, oak leaves and mistletoe interwoven on her head, a white robe and green sash to clothe her, and the vanquished beast's horns on a gilded pole behind the dais; hearing the eulogies respectively interpreted to her by Colonel Fluellen Wythan at one ear, and Captain Agincourt Gower at the other. A splendid scene; she might well insist to be present.

There, however, we are at the pitch of burlesque beyond her illustrious lord's capacity to stand. Peremptory orders from England arrive, commanding her return. She temporizes, postpones, and supplicates to have the period extended up to the close of the Eisteddfod. My lord's orders are imperatively repeated, and very blunt. He will not have her 'continue playing the fool down there.' She holds her ground from

August into February, and then sets forth, to undergo the further process of her taming at Esslemont in England; with Llewellyn and Vaughan and Cadwallader, and Watkyn and Shenkyn and the remains of the race of Owen Tudor, attending her; vowed to extract a receipt from the earl her lord's responsible servitors for the safe delivery of their heroine's person at the gates of Esslemont; *ich dien* their trumpeted motto.

Counting the number at four and twenty, it wears the look of an invasion. But the said number is a ballad number, and has been since the antique time. There was, at a lesser number, enough of a challenge about it for squires of England, never in those days backward to pick up a glove or give the ringing rejoinder for a thumb-bite, to ride out and tilt compliments with the Whitechapel Countess's green cavaliers, rally their sprites and entertain them exactly according to their degrees of dignity, as exhibited by their 'haviour under something of a trial; and satisfy also such temporary appetites as might be excited in them by (among other matters left to the luck of events) a metropolitan play upon the Saxon tongue, hard of understanding to the leeky cocks until their ready store of native pepper seasons it; which may require a corresponding English condiment to rectify the flavour of the stew.

Now the number of Saxe-Normans riding out to meet and greet the Welshmen is declared to have not exceeded nine. So much pretends to be historic, in opposition to the poetic version. They would, we may be sure, have made it a point of honour to meet and greet their invading guests in precisely similar numbers: a larger would have overshot the mark of courtesy; and doubtless a smaller have fallen deplorably short of it.

Therefore, an acquaintance with her chivalrous, if less impulsive, countrymen compels to the dismissing of the Dame's ballad authorities. She has every right to quote them for her own good pleasure, and may create in others an enjoyment of what has been called 'the Mackrell fry.'

Her notion of a ballad is, that it grows like mushrooms from a scuffle of feet on grass overnight, and is a sort of forest mother of the pied infant reared and trimmed by historians to show the world its fatherly antecedent steps. The hand of Rose Mackrell is at least suggested in more than one of the ballads. Here the Welsh irruption is a Chevy Chase; next we have the countess for a disputed Helen.

The lady's lord is not a shining figure. How can an undecided one be a dispenser of light? Poetry could never allow him to say with her:—

> 'Where'er I go I make a name,
> And leave a song to follow.'

Yet he was the master of her fortunes at the time; all the material power was his. Even doggerel verse (it is worth while to brood on the fact) denies a surviving pre-eminence to the potent moody, reverses the position between the driven and the driver. Poetry, however erratic, is less a servant of the bully Present, or pompous Past, than History. The Muse of History has neither the same divination of the intrinsic nor the devotion to it, though truly, she has possession of all the positive matter and holds us faster by the crediting senses.

Nine English cavaliers, then, left London early on a January or February morning in a Southerly direction, bearing East; and they were the Earl of Fleetwood's

intimates, of the half-dependent order; so we may suppose them to have gone at his bidding. That they met the procession of the Welsh, and claimed to take charge of the countess's carriage, near the Kentish border-line, is an assertion supported by testimony fairly acceptable.

Intelligence of the advancing party had reached the earl by courier, from the date of the first gathering on the bridge of Pont-y-pridd; and from Gloucester, along to the Thames at Reading; thence away to the Mole, from Mickleham, where the Surrey chalk runs its final turfy spine North-eastward to the slope upon Kentish soil.

Greatly to the astonishment of the Welsh cavaliers, a mounted footman, clad in the green and scarlet facings of Lord Fleetwood's livery, rode up to them a mile outside the principal towns and named the inn where the earl had ordered preparations for the reception of them. England's hospitality was offered on a princely scale. Cleverer fencing could not be.

The meeting, in no sense an encounter, occurred close by a thirty-acre meadow, famous over the county; and was remarkable for the punctilious exchange of ceremonial speech, danger being present; as we see powder-magazines protected by their walls and fosses and covered alleys. Notwithstanding which, there was a scintillation of sparks.

Lord Brailstone, spokesman of the welcoming party, expressed comic regrets that they had not an interpreter with them.

Mr. Owain Wythan, in the name of the Cambrian chivalry, assured him of their comprehension and appreciation of English slang.

Both gentlemen kept their heads uncovered in a suspense; they might for a word or two more of that savour have turned into the conveniently spacious meadow. They were induced, on the contrary, to enter the channel of English humour, by hearing Chumley Potts exclaim: 'His nob!' and all of them laughed at the condensed description of a good hit back, at the English party's cost.

Laughter, let it be but genuine, is of a common nationality, indeed a common fireside; and profound disagreement is not easy after it. The Dame professes to believe that 'Carinthia Jane' had to intervene as peacemaker, before the united races took the table in Esslemont's dining-hall for a memorable night of it, and a contest nearer the mark of veracity than that shown in another of the ballads she would have us follow. Whatever happened, they sat down at table together, and the point of honour for them each and every was, not to be first to rise from it. Once more the pure Briton and the mixed if not fused English engaged, Bacchus for instrument this time, Bacchus for arbiter of the fray.

You may imagine! says the Dame. She cites the old butler at Esslemont, 'as having been much questioned on the subject by her family relative, Dr. Glossop, and others interested to know the smallest items of the facts,'—and he is her authority for the declaration that the Welsh gentlemen and the English gentlemen, 'whatever their united number,' consumed the number of nine dozen and a half of old Esslemont wine before they rose, or as possibly sank, at the festive board at the hour of five of the morning.

Years later, this butler, Joshua Queeney, 'a much

enfeebled old man,' retold and enlarged the tale of the enormous consumption of his best wine; with a sacred oath to confirm it, and a tear expressive of elegiacal feelings.

'They bled me twelve dozen, not a bottle less,' she quotes him, after a minute description of his countenance and scrupulously brushed black suit, pensioner though he had become. He had grown, during the interval, to be more communicative as to particulars. The wines were four. Sherry led off the parade pace, Hock the trot into the merry canter, Champagne the racing gallop, Burgundy the grand trial of constitutional endurance for the enforced finish. All these wines, except the sparkling, had their date of birth in the precedent century. 'They went like water.'

Questioned anxiously by Dr. Glossop, Queeney maintained an impartial attitude, and said there was no victor, no vanquished. They did not sit in blocks. The tactics for preserving peace intermingled them. Each English gentleman had a Welsh gentleman beside him; they both sat firm; both fell together. The bottles or decanters were not stationary for the guest to fill his glass, they circulated, returning to an empty glass. All drank equally. Often the voices were high, the talk was loud. The gentlemen were too serious to sing.

At one moment of the evening Queeney confidently anticipated a 'fracassy,' he said. One of the foreign party—and they all spoke English, after five dozen bottles had gone the round, as correct as the English themselves—remarked on the seventy-years Old Brown Sherry, that 'it had a Madeira flavour.' He spoke it approvingly. Thereupon Lord Simon Pitscrew calls to

Queeney, asking him 'why Madeira had been supplied instead of Esslemont's renowned old Sherry?' A second Welsh gentleman gave his assurances that his friend had not said it *was* Madeira. But Lord Brailstone accused them of the worse unkindness to a venerable Old Brown Sherry, in attributing a Madeira flavour to it. Then another Welsh gentleman briskly and emphatically stated his opinion, that the attribution of Madeira flavour to it was a compliment. At this, which smelt strongly, he said, of insult, Captain Abrane called on the name of their absent host to warrant the demand of an apology to the Old Brown Sherry, for the imputation denying it an individual distinction. Chumley Potts offered generally to bet that he would distinguish blindfold at a single sip any Madeira from any first-class Sherry, Old Brown or Pale. 'Single sip or smell!' Ambrose Mallard cried, either for himself or his comrade, Queeney could not say which.

Of all Lord Fleetwood's following, Mr. Potts and Mr. Mallard were, the Dame informs us, Queeney's favourites, because they were so genial; and he remembered most of what they said and did, being moved to it by 'poor young Mr. Mallard's melancholy end and Mr. Potts's grief!'

The Welsh gentlemen, after paying their devoirs to the countess next morning, rode on in fresh health and spirits at midday to Barlings, the seat of Mr. Mason Fennell, a friend of Mr. Owain Wythan's. They shouted, in an unseemly way, Queeney thought, at their breakfast-table, to hear that three of the English party, namely, Captain Abrane, Mr. Mallard, and Mr. Potts, had rung for tea and toast in bed. Lord Simon Pitscrew, Lord Brailstone, and the rest of the English

were sore about it; for it certainly wore a look of constitutional inferiority on the English side, which could boast of indubitably stouter muscles. The frenzied spirits of the Welsh gentlemen, when riding off, let it be known what their opinion was. Under the protection of the countess's presence, they were so cheery as to seem triumphantly ironical; they sent messages of condolence to the three in bed.

With an undisguised reluctance, the countess, holding Mr. Owain Wythan's hand longer than was publicly decent, calling him by his Christian name, consented to their departure. As they left, they defiled before her; the vow was uttered by each, that at the instant of her summons he would mount and devote himself to her service, individually or collectively. She waved her hand to them. They ranged in line and saluted. She kissed her hand. Sweeping the cavaliers' obeisance, gallantest of bows, they rode away.

A striking scene, Dame Gossip says; but raises a wind over the clipped adventure, and is for recounting what London believed about it. Enough has been conceded for the stoppage of her intrusion; she is left in the likeness of a full-charged pistol capless to the clapping trigger.

That which London believed, or affected to believe about it, would fill chapters. There was during many months an impression of Lord Fleetwood's countess as of a tenacious, dread, prevailing young woman, both intrepid and astute, who had, by an exercise of various arts, legitimate in open war of husband and wife, gathered the pick of the Principality to storm and carry another of her husband's houses. The certification that her cavaliers were Welsh gentlemen of wealth

and position required a broader sneer at the Welsh than was warranted by later and more intimate acquaintance, if it could be made to redound to her discredit. So, therefore, added to the national liking for a plucky woman, she gained the respect for power. Whitechapel was round her like London's one street's length extension of smoky haze, reminder of the morning's fog under novel sunbeams.

Simultaneously, strange to say, her connubial antagonist, far from being overshadowed, grew to be proportionately respected, and on the strength of his deserts, apart from his title and his wealth. He defended himself, as he was bound to do, by welcoming the picked Welsh squires with hospitable embrace, providing ceremonies, receptions, and most comfortable arrangements for them, along the route. But in thus gravely entering into the knightly burlesque of the procession, and assisting to swell the same, he not only drew the venom from it, he stood forth as England's deputed representative, equal to her invasive, challenging guests at all points, comic, tragic, or cordial. He saw that it had to be treated as a national affair; and he parried the imputation which would have injured his country's name for courtly breeding, had they been ill-received, while he rescued his own good name from derision by joining the extravagance.

He was well inspired. It was popularly felt to be the supreme of clever—nay, noble—fencing. Really noble, though the cleverness was conspicuous. A defensive stroke, protecting him against his fair one's violent charge of horse, warded off an implied attack upon Old England, in Old England's best-humoured, easy manner.

Supposing the earl to have acted otherwise, his

countess would virtually have ridden over him, and wild Wales have cast a shadow on the chivalry of magisterial England. He and his country stood to meet the issue together the moment the Countess of Fleetwood and her escort crossed the Welsh border; when it became a question between the hot-hearted, at their impetuous gallop, and the sedatively minded, in an unfortified camp of arm-chairs. The earl's adroitness, averting a collision fatal or discomforting to both, disengaged him from an incumbent odium, of which, it need hardly be stated, neither the lady nor her attendant cavaliers had any notion at the hour of the assembly for the start for England on the bridge of Pont-y-pridd. The hungry mother had the safety of her babe in thought. The hot-headed Welshmen were sworn to guard their heroine.

That is the case presented by the Dame's papers, when the incredible is excised. She claims the being a good friend to fiction in feeding popular voracity with all her stores. But the Old Buccaneer, no professed friend to it, is a sounder guide in the maxim, where he says: *Deliver yourself by permit of your cheque on the Bank of Reason, and your account is increased instead of lessened.*

Our account with credulity, he would signify.

The Dame does not like the shaking for a sifting. Romance, however, is not a mountain made of gold, but a vein running some way through; and it must be engineered, else either we are filled with wind from swallowing indigestible substance, or we consent to a debasing of the currency, which means her to-morrow's bankruptcy; and the spectacle of Romance in the bankruptcy court degrades us (who believe we are allied to

her) as cruelly as it appals. It gives the cynic licence to bark day and night for an entire generation.

Surely the Countess of Fleetwood's drive from the Welsh borders to Esslemont, accompanied by the chosen of the land, followed by the vivats of the whole Principality, and England gaping to hear the stages of her progress, may be held sufficiently romantic without stuffing of surprises and conflicts, adventures at inns, alarms at midnight, windings of a horn over hilly verges of black heaths, and the rape of the child, the pursuit, the recovery of the child, after a new set of heroine performances on the part of a strung-wire mother, whose outcry in a waste country district, as she clasps her boy to her bosom again : 'There 's a farm I see for milk for him!' the Dame repeats, having begun with an admission that the tale has been contradicted, and is not produced on authority. The end in design is to win the ear by making a fuss, and roll event upon event for the braining of common intelligence, until her narrative resembles dusty troopings along a road to the races.

Carinthia and her babe reached Esslemont, no matter what impediments. There, like a stopped runner whose pantings lengthen to the longer breath, her alarms over the infant subsided, ceasing for as long as she clasped it or was in the room with it. Walking behind the precious donkey-basket round the park, she went armed, and she soon won a fearful name at Kentish cottage-hearths, though she was not black to see, nor old. No, she was very young. But she did all the things that soldiers do, —was a bit of a foreigner;—she brought a reputation up from the Welsh land, and it had a raven's croak and a glow-worm's drapery and a goblin's origin.

Something was hinted of her having agitated London once. Somebody dropped word of her and that old Lord Levellier up at Croridge. She stalked park and country at night. Stories, one or two near the truth, were told of a restless and a very decided lady down these parts as well; and the earl her husband daren't come nigh in his dread of her, so that he runs as if to save his life out of every place she enters. And he 's not one to run for a trifle. His pride is pretty well a match for princes and princesses.

All the same, he shakes in his shoes before her, durst hardly spy at Esslemont again while she 's in occupation. His managing gentleman comes down from him, and goes up from her; that 's how they communicate. One week she 's quite solitary; another week the house is brimful as can be. She 's the great lady entertaining then. Yet they say it 's a fact, she has not a shilling of her own to fling at a beggar. She 'll stock a cottage wanting it with provision for a fortnight or more, and she 'll order the doctor in, and she 'll call and see the right things done for illness. But no money; no one 's to expect money of her. The shots you hear in Esslemont grounds out of season are she and her maid, always alongside her, at it before a target on a bank, trying that old Lord Levellier's gunpowder out of his mill; and he 's got no money either; not for his workmen, they say, until they congregate, and a threatening to blow him up brings forth half their pay, on account. But he 's a known miser. She 's not that. She 's a pleasant-faced lady for the poor. She has the voice poor people like. It 's only her enemy, maybe her husband, she can be terrible to. She'd drive a hole through a robber stopping her on the road, as soon as look at him.

This was Esslemont's atmosphere working its way to the earl, not so very long after the establishment of his countess there. She could lay hold of the English, too, it seemed. Did she call any gentleman of the district by his Christian name? Lord Simon Pitscrew reported her doing so in the case of one of the Welshmen. Those Welshmen! Apparently they are making a push for importance in the kingdom!

## CHAPTER XXXV

### IN WHICH CERTAIN CHANGES MAY BE DISCERNED

Behind his white plaster of composure, Lord Fleetwood had alternately raged and wondered during the passage of the Welsh cavalcade up Eastward:—a gigantic burlesque, that would have swept any husband of their heroine off the scene had he failed to encounter it deferentially, preserving his countenance and ostensibly his temper. An idiot of a woman, incurable in her lunacy, suspects the father of the infant as guilty of designs done to death in romances; and so she manages to set going solemnly a bigger blazing Tom Fool's show than any known or written romance gives word of! And that fellow, Gower Woodseer, pleads, in apology, for her husband's confusion, physiologically, that it comes of her having been carried off and kept a prisoner when she was bearing the child and knitting her whole mind to ensure the child. But what sheer animals these women are, if they take impressions in such a manner! And Mr. Philosopher argues that the

abusing of woman proves the hating of Nature; names it 'the commonest insanity, and the deadliest,' and men are 'planted in the bog of their unclean animal condition until they do proper homage to the animal Nature makes the woman be.' Oh, pish, sir!—as Meeson Corby has the habit of exclaiming when Abrane's 'fiddler' argues him into a corner. The fellow can fiddle fine things and occasionally clear sense:—'Men hating Nature are insane. Women and Nature are close. If it is rather general to hate Nature and maltreat women, we begin to see why the world is a mad world.' That is the tune of the fiddler's fiddling. As for him, something protects him. He was the slave of Countess Livia; like Abrane, Mallard, Corby, St. Ombre, young Cressett, and the dozens. He is now her master. Can a man like that be foolish, in saying of the Countess Carinthia, she is 'not only quick to understand, she is in the quick of understanding'? Gower Woodseer said it of her in Wales, and again on the day of his walk up to London from Esslemont, after pedestrian exercise, which may heat the frame, but cools the mind. She stamped that idea on a thoughtful fellow.

He's a Welshman. They are all excitable,—have heads on hound's legs for a flying figure in front. Still, they must have an object, definitely seen by them—definite to them if dim to their neighbours; and it will run in the poetic direction: and the woman to win them, win all classes of them, within so short a term, is a toss above extraordinary. She is named Carinthia: suitable name for the Welsh pantomimic procession. Or cry out the word in an amphitheatre of Alpine crags,—it sounds at home.

She is a daughter of the mountains,—should never have left them. She is also a daughter of the Old Buccaneer—no poor specimen of the fighting Englishman of his day. According to Rose Mackrell, he, this Old Buccaneer, it was, who, by strange adventures, brought the great Welsh mines into the family! He would not be ashamed in spying through his nautical glass, up or down, at his daughter's doings. She has not yet developed a taste for the mother's tricks:—the mother, said to have been a kindler. That Countess of Cressett was a romantic little fly-away bird. Both parents were brave: the daughter would inherit gallantry. She inherits a kind of thwarted beauty. Or it needs the situation seen in Wales: her arms up and her unaffrighted eyes over the unappeasable growl. She had then the beauty coming from the fathom depths, with the torch of Life in the jaws of Death to light her: beauty of the nether kingdom mounting to an upper place in the higher. Her beauty recognized, the name of the man who married her is not Longears—not to himself, is the main point; nor will it be to the world when he shows that it is not so to himself.

Suppose he went to her, would she be trying at domination? The woman's pitch above woman's beauty was perceived to be no intermittent beam, but so living as to take the stamp of permanence. More than to say it was hers, it was she. What a deadly peril brought into view was her character—soul, some call it: generally a thing rather distasteful in women, or chilling to the masculine temperament. Here it attracts. Here, strange to say, it is the decided attraction, in a woman of a splendid figure and a known softness. By rights, she should have more

understanding than to suspect the husband as guilty of designs done to death in romances. However, she is not a craven who compliments him by fearing him, and he might prove that there is no need for fear. But she would be expecting explanations before the reconcilement. The bosom of these women will keep on at its quick heaving until they have heard certain formal words, oaths to boot. How speak them?

His old road of the ladder appeared to Fleetwood an excellent one for obviating explanations and effecting the reconcilement without any temporary seeming forfeit of the native male superiority. For there she is at Esslemont now; any night the window could be scaled. 'It is my husband.' The soul was in her voice when she said it.

He remembered that it had not ennobled her to him then; had not endeared; was taken for a foreign example of the childish artless, imperfectly suited to our English clime. The tone of adorable utterances, however much desired, is never for repetition; nor is the cast of divine sweet looks; nor are the particular deeds—once pardonable, fitly pleaded. A second scaling of her window—no, night's black hills girdle the scene with hoarse echoes; the moon rushes out of her clouds grimacing. Even Fleetwood's devil, much addicted to cape and sword and ladder, the vulpine and the gryphine, rejected it.

For she had, by singular transformation since, and in spite of a deluging grotesque that was antecedently incredible, she had become a personage, counting her adherents; she could put half the world in motion on her side. Yell those Welshmen to scorn, they were on a plane finding native ground with as large a body

of these English. His baser mind bowed to the fact. Her aspect was entirely different; her attitude toward him as well: insomuch that he had to chain her to her original features by the conjuring of recollected phrases memorable for the vivid portraiture of her foregone simplicity and her devotion to 'my husband.'

Yes, there she was at Esslemont, securely there, near him, to be seen any day; worth claiming, too; a combatant figure, provocative of the fight and the capture rather than repellent. The respect enforced by her attitude awakened in him his inherited keen old relish for our intersexual strife and the indubitable victory of the stronger, with the prospect of slavish charms, fawning submission, marrowy spoil. Or perhaps, preferably, a sullen submission, reluctant charms; far more marrowy. Or who can say?—the creature is a rocket of the shot into the fiery garland of stars; she may personate any new marvel, be an unimagined terror, an overwhelming bewitchment: for she carries the unexpected in her bosom. And does it look like such indubitable victory, when the man, the woman's husband, divided from her, toothsome to the sex, acknowledges within himself and lets the world know his utter dislike of other women's charms, to the degree that herbal anchorites positively could not be colder, could not be chaster:—and he no forest bird, but having the garden of the variety of fairest flowers at nod and blush about him! That was the truth. Even Henrietta's beauty had the effect of a princess's birthday doll admired on show by a contemptuous boy.

Wherefore, then, did the devil in him seek to pervert this loveliest of young women and feed on her humiliation for one flashing minute? The taste had gone, the

desire of the vengeance was extinct, personal gratification could not exist. He spied into himself, and set it down to one among the many mysteries.

Men uninstructed in analysis of motives arrive at this dangerous conclusion, which spares their pride and caresses their indolence, while it flatters the sense of internal vastness, and invites to headlong intoxication. It allows them to think they are of such a compound, and must necessarily act in that manner. They are not taught at the schools or by the books of the honoured places in the libraries, to examine and see the simplicity of these mysteries, which it would be here and there a saving grace for them to see; as the minstrel, dutifully inclining to the prosy in their behalf and morality's, should exhibit; he should arrest all the characters of his drama to spring it to vision and strike perchance the chord primarily if not continually moving them, that readers might learn the why and how of a germ of evil, its flourishing under rebuke, the persistency of it after the fell creative energy has expired and pleasure sunk to be a phlegmatic dislike, almost a loathing.

This would here be done, but for signs of a barometric dead fall in Dame Gossip's chaps, already heavily pendent. She would be off with us on one of her whirling cyclones or elemental mad waltzes, if a step were taken to the lecturing-desk. We are so far in her hands that we have to keep her quiet. She will not hear of the reasons and the change of reasons for one thing and the other. Things were so: narrate them, and let readers do their reflections for themselves, she says, denouncing our conscientious method as the direct road downward to the dreadful modern appeal to the senses and assault on them for testimony to the veracity of

everything described; to the extent that, at the mention of a vile smell, it shall be blown into the reader's nostrils, and corking-pins attack the comfortable seat of him simultaneously with a development of surprises. 'Thither your conscientiousness leads.'

It is not perfectly visible. And she would gain information of the singular nature of the young of the male sex in listening to the wrangle between Lord Fleetwood and Gower Woodseer on the subject of pocket-money for the needs of the Countess Carinthia. For it was a long and an angry one, and it brought out both of them, exposing, of course, the more complex creature the most. They were near a rupture, so scathing was Gower's tone of irate professor to shirky scholar—or it might be put, German professor to English scuffle-shoe.

She is for the scene of 'Chillon John's' attempt to restore the respiration of his bank-book by wager; to wit, that he would walk a mile, run a mile, ride a mile, and jump ten hurdles, then score five rifle-shots at a three hundred yards' distant target within a count of minutes; twenty-five, she says; and vows it to have been one of the most exciting of scenes ever witnessed on green turf in the land of wagers; and that he was accomplishing it quite certainly when, at the first of the hurdles, a treacherous unfolding and waving of a white flag caused his horse to swerve and the loss of one minute, seven and twenty seconds, before he cleared the hurdles; after which, he had to fire his shots hurriedly, and the last counted blank, for being outside the circle of the stated time.

So he was beaten. But a terrific uproar over the field proclaimed the popular dissatisfaction. Presently

there was a cleavage of the mob, and behold a chase at the heels of a fellow to rival the very captain himself for fleetness. He escaped, leaving his pole with the sheet nailed to it, by way of flag, in proof of foul play; or a proof, as the other side declared, of an innocently premature signalizing of the captain's victory. However that might be, he ran. Seeing him spin his legs at a hound's pace, half a mile away, four countrymen attempted to stop him. All four were laid on their backs in turn with stupefying celerity; and on rising to their feet, and for the remainder of their natural lives, they swore that no man but a Champion could have floored them so. This again may have been due to the sturdy island pride of four good men knocked over by one. We are unable to decide. Wickedness there was, the Dame says; and she counsels the world to 'put and put together,' for, at any rate, 'a partial elucidation of a most mysterious incident.' As to the wager-money, the umpires dissented; a famous quarrel, that does not concern us here, sprang out of the dispute; which was eventually, after great disturbance of the country, referred to three leading sportsmen in the metropolitan sphere, who pronounced the wager 'off,' being two to one. Hence arose the dissatisfied third party, and the letters of this minority to the newspapers, exciting, if not actually dividing, all England for several months.

Now the month of December was the month of the Dame's mysterious incident. From the date of January, as Madge Winch knew, Christopher Ines had ceased to be in the service of the Earl of Fleetwood. At Esslemont Park gates, one winter afternoon of a North-east wind blowing 'rum-shrub into men for a stand

against rheumatics,' as he remarked, Ines met the girl by appointment, and informing her that he had money, and that Lord Fleetwood was 'a black nobleman,' he proposed immediate marriage. The hymeneal invitation, wafted to her on the breath of rum-shrub, obtained no response from Madge until she had received evasive answers as to why the earl dismissed him, and whence the stock of money came.

Lord Fleetwood, he repeated, was a black nobleman. She brought him to say of his knowledge, that Lord Fleetwood hated, and had reason to hate, Captain Levellier. 'Shouldn't I hate the man took my sweetheart from me and popped me into the noose with his sister instead?' Madge was now advised to be overcome by the smell of rum-shrub:—a mere fancy drink tossed off by heroes in their idle moments, before they settle down to the serious business of real drinking, Kit protested. He simulated envious admiration of known heroes, who meant business, and scorned any of the weak stuff under brandy, and went at it till the bottles were the first to give in. For why? They had to stomach an injury from the world or their young woman, and half-way on they shoved that young person and all enemies aside, trampled 'em. That was what Old O'Devy signified; and many's the man driven to his consolation by a cat of a girl, who's like the elements in their puffs and spits at a gallant ship, that rides the tighter and the tighter for all they can do to capsize. 'Tighter than ever I was tight I'll be to-night, if you can't behave.'

They fell upon the smack of words. Kit hitched and huffed away, threatening bottles. Whatever he had done, it was to establish the petticoated hornet

in the dignity of matron of a champion light-weight's wholesome retreat of a public-house. A spell of his larkish hilarity was for the punishment of the girl devoted to his heroical performances, as he still considered her to be, though women are notoriously volatile, and her language was mounting a stage above the kitchen.

Madge had little sorrow for him. She was the girl of the fiery heart, not the large heart; she could never be devoted to more than one at a time, and her mistress had all her heart. In relation to Kit, the thought of her having sacrificed her good name to him, flung her on her pride of chastity, without the reckoning of it as a merit. It was the inward assurance of her independence: the young spinster's planting of the standard of her proud secret knowledge of what she is, let it be a thing of worth or what you will, or the world think as it may. That was her thought.

Her feeling, the much livelier animation, was bitter grief, because her mistress, unlike herself, had been betrayed by her ignorance of the man into calling him husband. Just some knowledge of the man! The warning to the rescue might be there. For nothing did the dear lady weep except for her brother's evil fortune. The day when she had intelligence from Mrs. Levellier of her brother's defeat, she wept over the letter on her knees long hours. 'Me, my child, my brother!' she cried more than once. She had her suspicion of the earl then, and instantly, as her loving servant had. The suspicion was now no dark light, but a clear day-beam to Madge. She adopted Kit's word of Lord Fleetwood. 'A black nobleman he is! he is!' Her mistress had written like a creature

begging him for money. He did not deign a reply. To her! When he had seen good proof she was the bravest woman on earth; and she rushed at death to save a child, a common child, as people say. And who knows but she saved that husband of hers, too, from bites might have sent him out of the world barking, and all his wealth not able to stop him!

They were in the month of March. Her dear mistress had been begging my lord through Mr. Woodseer constantly of late for an allowance of money; on her knees to him, as it seemed; and Mr. Woodseer was expected at Esslemont. Her mistress was looking for him eagerly. Something her heart was in depended on it, and only her brother could be the object, for now she loved only him of these men; though a gentleman coming over from Barlings pretty often would pour mines of money into her lap for half a word.

Carinthia had walked up to Croridge in the morning to meet her brother at Lekkatts. Madge was left guardian of the child. She liked a stroll any day round Esslemont Park, where her mistress was beginning to strike roots; as she soon did wherever she was planted, despite a tone of pity for artificial waters and gardeners' arts. Madge respected them. She knew nothing of the grandeur of wildness. Her native English veneration for the smoothing hand of wealth led her to think Esslemont the home of all homes for a lady with her husband beside her. And without him, too, if he were wafted over seas and away: if there would but come a wind to do that!

The wild Northeaster tore the budded beeches. Master John Edward Russett lay in the cradling-basket drawn by his docile donkey, Martha and Madge to

right and left of him, a speechless rustic, graduating in footman's livery, to rear.

At slow march round by the wrinkled water, Madge saw the park gates flung wide. A coach drove up the road along on the farther rim of the circle, direct for the house. It stopped, the team turned leisurely and came at a smart pace toward the carriage-basket. Lord Fleetwood was recognized.

He alighted, bidding one of his grooms drive to stables. Madge performed her reverence, aware that she did it in clumsy style; his presence had startled her instincts and set them travelling.

'Coldish for the youngster,' he said. 'All well, Madge?'

'Baby sleeps in the air, my lord,' she replied. 'My lady has gone to Croridge.'

'Sharp air for a child, isn't it?'

'My lady teaches him to breathe with his mouth shut, like her father taught her when she was little. Our baby never catches colds.'

Madge displayed the child's face.

The father dropped a glance on it from the height of skies.

'Croridge, you said?'

'Her uncle, Lord Levellier's.'

'You say, never catches cold?'

'Not our baby, my lord.'

Probably good management on the part of the mother. But the wife's absence disappointed the husband strung to meet her, and an obtrusion of her practical motherhood blurred the prospect demanded by his present step.

'When do you expect her return, Madge?'

'Before nightfall, my lord.'

'She walks?'

'Oh yes, my lady is fond of walking.'

'I suppose she could defend herself?'

'My lady walks with a good stick.'

Fleetwood weighed the chances; beheld her figure attacked, Amazonian.

'And tell me, my dear—Kit?'

'I don't see more of Kit Ines.'

'What has the fellow done?'

'I'd like him to let me know why he was dismissed.'

'Ah. He kept silent on that point.'

'He let out enough.'

'You've punished him, if he's to lose a bonny sweetheart, poor devil! Your sister Sally sends you messages?'

'We're both of us grateful, my lord.'

He lifted the thin veil from John Edward Russett's face with a loveless hand.

'You remember the child bitten by a dog down in Wales. I have word from my manager there. Poor little wretch has died—died raving.'

Madge's bosom went shivering up and sank. 'My lady was right. She's not often wrong.'

'She's looking well?' said the earl, impatient with her moral merits:—and this communication from Wales had been the decisive motive agent in hurrying him at last to Esslemont. The next moment he heard coolly of the lady's looking well. He wanted fervid eulogy of his wife's looks, if he was to hear any.

## CHAPTER XXXVI

### BELOW THE SURFACE AND ABOVE

The girl was counselled by the tremor of her instincts to forbear to speak of the minor circumstance, that her mistress had, besides a good stick, a good companion on the road to Croridge: and she rejoiced to think her mistress had him, because it seemed an intimation of justice returning upon earth. She was combative, a born rebel against tyranny. She weighed the powers, she felt to the worth, of the persons coming into her range of touch: she set her mistress and my lord fronting for a wrestle, and my lord's wealth went to thin vapour, and her mistress's character threw him. More dimly, my lord and the Welsh gentleman were put to the trial: a tough one for these two men. She did not proclaim the winner, but a momentary flutter of pity in the direction of Lord Fleetwood did as much. She pitied him; for his presence at Esslemont betrayed an inclination; he was ignorant of his lady's character, of how firm she could be to defy him and all the world, in her gratitude to the gentleman she thought of as her true friend, smiled at for his open nature, called by his Christian name.

The idea of a piece of information stinging Lord Fleetwood, the desire to sting, so to be an instrument of retribution (one of female human nature's ecstasies); and her abstaining, that she might not pain the lord who had been generous to her sister Sally, made the force in Madge's breast which urges to the gambling

for the undeveloped, entitled prophecy. She kept it low and felt it thrill.

Lord Fleetwood chatted; Madge had him wincing. He might pull the cover of the child's face carelessly—he looked at the child. His look at the child was a thought of the mother. If he thought of the mother, he would be wanting to see her. If he heard her call a gentleman by his Christian name, and heard the gentleman say 'Carinthia,' my lord would begin to shiver at changes. Women have to do unusual things when they would bring that outer set to human behaviour. Perhaps my lord would mount the coach-box and whip his horses away, adieu forever. His lady would not weep. He might, perhaps, command her to keep her mouth shut from gentlemen's Christian names, all except his own. His lady would not obey. He had to learn something of changes that had come to others as well as to himself. Ah, and then would he dare hint, as base men will? He may blow foul smoke on her, she will shine out of it. He has to learn what she is, that is his lesson; and let him pray all night and work hard all day for it not to be too late. Let him try to be a little like Mr. Woodseer, who worships the countess, and is hearty with the gentleman she treats as her best of friends. There is the real nobleman.

Fleetwood chatted on airily. His instincts were duller than those of the black-browed girl, at whom he gazed for idle satisfaction of eye from time to time while she replied demurely and maintained her drama of the featureless but well-distinguished actors within her bosom,—a round, plump bust, good wharfage and harbourage, he was thinking. Excellent harbourage, supposing the arms out in pure good-will. A girl to

hold her voyager fast and safe! Men of her class had really a capital choice in a girl like this. Men of another class as well, possibly, for temporary anchorage out mid-channel. No?—possibly not. Here and there a girl is a Tartar. Ines talked of her as if she were a kind of religious edifice and a doubt were sacrilege. She could impress the rascal: girls have their arts for reaching the holy end, and still they may have a welcome for a foreign ship.

The earl said humorously: 'You will grant me permission to lunch at your mistress's table in her absence?' And she said: 'My lord!' And he resumed, to waken her interest with a personal question: 'You like our quiet country round Esslemont?' She said: 'I do,' and gave him plain look for look. Her eye was undefended: he went into it, finding neither shallow nor depth, simply the look, always the look; whereby he knew that no story of man was there, and not the shyest of remote responsive invitations from Nature's wakened and detected rogue. The bed of an unmarried young woman's eye yields her secret of past and present to the intrepid diver, if he can get his plunge; he holds her for the tenth of a minute, that is the revealment. Jewel or oyster-shell, it is ours. She cannot withhold it, he knew right well. This girl, then, was, he could believe, one of the rarely exampled innocent in knowledge. He was practised to judge.

Invitation or challenge or response from the handsomest he would have scorned just then. His native devilry suffered a stir at sight of an innocent in knowledge and spotless after experiences. By a sudden singular twist, rather unfairly, naturally, as it happened,

he attributed it to an influence issuing from her mistress, to whom the girl was devoted, whom consequently she copied; might physically, and also morally, at a distance, resemble.

'Well, you've been a faithful servant to your lady, my dear; I hope you'll be comfortable here,' he said. 'She likes the mountains.'

'My lady would be quite contented if she could pass two months of the year in the mountains,' Madge answered.

'Look at me. They say people living together get a likeness to one another. What's your opinion? Upon my word, your eyebrows remind me, though they're not the colour—they have a bend . . .'

'You've seen my lady in danger, my lord?'

'Yes; well, there's no one to resemble her there, she has her mark—kind of superhuman business. We're none of us 'fifty feet high, with phosphorous heads,' as your friend Mr. Gower Woodseer says of the prodigiosities. Lady Fleetwood is back—when?'

'Before dark, she should be.'

He ran up the steps to the house.

At Lekkatts beneath Croridge a lean midday meal was being finished hard on the commencement by a silent company of three. When eating is choking to the younger members of the repast, bread and cold mutton-bone serve the turn as conclusively as the Frenchman's buffet-dishes. Carinthia's face of unshed tears dashed what small appetite Chillon had. Lord Levellier plied his fork in his right hand ruminating, his back an arch across his plate.

Riddles to the thwarted young, these old people will not consent to be read by sensations. Carinthia

watched his jaws at their work of eating under his victim's eye—knowing Chillon to be no longer an officer in the English service; knowing that her beloved had sold out for the mere money to pay debts and support his Henrietta; knowing, as he must know, that Chillon's act struck a knife to pierce his mother's breast through her coffin-boards! This old man could eat, and he could withhold the means due to his dead sister's son. Could he look on Chillon and not feel that the mother's heart was beating in her son's fortunes? Half the money due to Chillon would have saved him from ruin.

Lord Levellier laid his fork on the plate. He munched his grievance with his bit of meat. The nephew and niece here present feeding on him were not so considerate as the Welsh gentleman, a total stranger, who had walked up to Lekkatts with the Countess of Fleetwood, and expressed the preference to feed at an inn. Relatives are cormorants.

His fork on his plate released the couple. Barely half a dozen words, before the sitting to that niggard restoration, had informed Carinthia of the step taken by her brother. She beckoned him to follow her.

'The worst is done now, Chillon. I am silent. Uncle is a rock. You say we must not offend. I have given him my whole mind. Say where Riette is to live.'

'Her headquarters will be here, at a furnished house. She 's with her cousin, the Dowager.'

'Yes. She should be with me.'

'She wants music. She wants—poor girl! let her have what comes to her.'

Their thoughts beneath their speech were like fish darting under shadow of the traffic bridge.

'She loves music,' said Carinthia; 'it is almost life to her, like fresh air to me. Next month I am in London; Lady Arpington is kind. She will give me as much of their polish as I can take. I dare say I should feel the need of it if I were an enlightened person.'

'For instance, did I hear "Owain," when your Welsh friend was leaving?' Chillon asked.

'It was his dying wife's wish, brother.'

'Keep to the rules, dear.'

'They have been broken, Chillon.'

'Mend them.'

'That would be a step backward.'

'"*The right one for defence!*" father says.'

'Father says, "*The habit of the defensive paralyzes will.*"'

'"*Womanizes*," he says, Carin. You quote him falsely, to shield the sex. Quite right. But my sister must not be tricky. Keep to the rules. You're an exceptional woman, and it would be a good argument, if you were not in an exceptional position.'

'Owain is the exceptional man, brother.'

'My dear, after all, you have a husband.'

'I have a brother, I have a friend, I have no—I am a man's wife and the mother of his child; I am free, or husband would mean dungeon. Does my brother want an oath from me? That I can give him.'

'Conduct, yes; I couldn't doubt you,' said Chillon. 'But "*the world's a flood at a dyke for women, and they must keep watch*," you've read.'

'But Owain is not our enemy,' said Carinthia, in her deeper tones, expressive of conviction and not thereby assuring to hear. 'He is a man with men, a child with

women. His Rebecca could describe him; I laugh now at some of her sayings of him; I see her mouth, so tenderly comical over her big "simpleton," she called him, and loved him so.'

The gentleman appeared on the waste land above the house. His very loose black suit and a peculiar roll of his gait likened him to a mourning boatswain who was jolly. In Lord Levellier's workshop his remarks were to the point. Chillon's powders for guns and blasting interested him, and he proposed to ride over from Barlings to witness a test of them.

'You are staying at Barlings?' Chillon said.

'Yes; now Carinthia is at Esslemont,' he replied, astoundingly the simpleton.

His conversation was practical and shrewd on the walk with Chillon and Carinthia down to Esslemont: evidently he was a man well armed to encounter the world; social usages might be taught him. Chillon gained a round view of the worthy simple fellow, unlikely to turn out impracticable, for he talked such good sense upon matters of business.

Carinthia saw her brother tickled and interested. A feather moved her. Full of tears though she was, her heart lay open to the heavens and their kind, small, wholesome gifts. Her happiness in the walk with her brother and her friend—the pair of them united by her companionship, both of them showing they counted her their comrade—was the nearest to the radiant day before she landed on an island, and imagined happiness grew here, and found it to be gilt thorns, loud mockery. A shaving Northeaster tore the scream from hedges and the roar from copses under a faceless breadth of sky, and she said, as they turned into Esslemont Park

lane: 'We have had one of our old walks to-day, Chillon!'

'You used to walk together long walks over in your own country,' said Mr. Wythan.

'Yes, Owain, we did, and my brother never knew me tired.'

'Never knew you confess to it,' said Chillon, as he swallowed the name on her lips.

'Walking was flying over there, brother.'

'Say once or twice in Wales, too,' Mr. Wythan begged of her.

'Wales reminded. Yes, Owain, I shall not forget Wales, Welsh people. Mr. Woodseer says they have the three-stringed harp in their breasts, and one string is always humming, whether you pull it or no.'

'That's love of country! that's their love of wild Wales, Carinthia.'

There was a quiet interrogation in Chillon's turn of the head at this fervent simpleton.

'I love them for that hum,' said she. 'It joins one in me.'

'Call to them any day, they are up, ready to march!'

'Oh, dear souls!' Carinthia said.

Her breath drew in.

The three were dumb. They saw Lord Fleetwood standing in the park gateway.

## CHAPTER XXXVII

### BETWEEN CARINTHIA AND HER LORD

The earl's easy grace of manner was a ceremonial mantle on him as he grasped the situation in a look. He bent with deferential familiarity to his countess, exactly toning the degree of difference which befitted a salute to the two gentlemen, amiable or hostile.

'There and back?' he said, and conveyed a compliment to Carinthia's pedestrian vigour in the wary smile which can be recalled for a snub.

She replied: 'We have walked the distance, my lord.'

Her smile was the braced one of an untired stepper.

'A cold wind for you.'

'We walked fast.'

She compelled him to take her in the plural, though he addressed her separately, but her tones had their music.

'Your brother, Captain Kirby-Levellier, I believe?'

'My brother is not of the army now, my lord.'

She waved hand for Madge to conduct donkey and baby to the house. He noticed. He was unruffled.

The form of amenity expected from her, in relation to her brother, was not exhibited. She might perhaps be feeling herself awkward at introductions, and had to be excused.

'I beg,' he said, and motioned to Chillon the way of welcome into the park, saw the fixed figure, and passed over the unspoken refusal, with a remark to Mr. Wythan: 'At Barlings, I presume?'

'My tent is pitched there,' was the answer.

'Good-bye, my brother,' said Carinthia.

Chillon folded his arms round her. 'God bless you, dear love. Let me see you soon.' He murmured: 'You can protect yourself.'

'Fear nothing for me, dearest.'

She kissed her brother's cheek. The strain of her spread fingers on his shoulder signified no dread at her being left behind.

Strangers observing their embrace would have vowed that the pair were brother and sister, and of a notable stock.

'I will walk with you to Croridge again when you send word you are willing to go; and so, good-bye, Owain,' she said.

She gave her hand; frankly she pressed the Welshman's, he not a whit behind her in frankness.

Fleetwood had a skimming sense of a drop upon a funny, whirly world. He kept from giddiness, though the whirl had lasted since he beheld the form of a wild forest girl, dancing, as it struck him now, over an abyss, on the plumed shoot of a stumpy tree.

Ay, and she danced at the ducal schloss;—she mounted his coach like a witch of the Alps up crags;—she was beside him pelting to the vale under a leaden Southwester;—she sat solitary by the fireside in the room of the inn.

Veil it. He consented to the veil he could not lift. He had not even power to try, and his heart thumped.

London's Whitechapel Countess glided before him like a candle in the fog.

He had accused her as the creature destroying Romance. Was it gold in place of gilding, absolute upper human life that the ridiculous object at his heels

over London proposed instead of delirious brilliancies, drunken gallops, poison-syrups,—puffs of a young man's vapours?

There was Madge and the donkey basket-trap ahead on the road to the house, bearing proof of the veiled had-been: signification of a might-have-been. Why not a possible might-be? Still the might-be might be. Looking on this shaven earth and sky of March with the wrathful wind at work, we know that it is not the end: a day follows for the world. But looking on those blown black funeral sprays, and the wrinkled chill waters, and the stare of the Esslemont house-windows, it has an appearance of the last lines of our written volume: dead Finis. Not death; fouler, the man alive seeing himself stretched helpless for the altering of his deeds; a coffin carrying him; the fatal white-headed sacerdotal official intoning his aims on the march to front, the drear craped files of the liveried, salaried mourners over his failure trooping at his heels.

Frontword was the small lake's grey water, rearward an avenue of limes.

But the man alive, if but an inch alive, can so take his life in his clutch, that he does alter, cleanse, recast his deeds:—it is known; priests proclaim it, philosophers admit it.

Can he lay his clutch on another's life, and wring out the tears shed, the stains of the bruises, recollection of the wrongs?

Contemplate the wounded creature as a woman. Then, what sort of woman is she? She was once under a fascination—ludicrously, painfully, intensely like a sort of tipsy poor puss, the trapped hare tossed to her serpent; and thoroughly reassured for a few caresses,

quite at home, caged and at home; and all abloom with pretty ways, modest pranks, innocent fondlings. Gobbled, my dear!

It is the doom of the innocents, a natural fate. Smother the creature with kindness again, show we are a point in the scale above that old coiler snake—which broke no bones, bit not so very deep;—she will be, she ought to be, the woman she was. That is, if she was then sincere, a dose of kindness should operate happily to restore the honeymoony fancies, hopes, trusts, dreams, all back, as before the honeymoon showed the silver crook and shadowy hag's back of a decaying crescent. And true enough, the poor girl's young crescent of a honeymoon went down sickly-yellow rather early. It can be renewed. She really was at that time rather romantic. She became absurd. Romance is in her, nevertheless. She is a woman of mettle: she is probably expecting to be wooed. One makes a hash of yesterday's left dish, but she may know no better. 'Add a pickle,' as Chummy Potts used to say. The dish is rendered savoury by a slight expenditure of attentions, just a dab of intimated soft stuff.

'Pleasant to see you established here, if you find the place agreeable,' he said.

She was kissing her hand to her brother, all her eyes for him—or for the couple; and they were hidden by the park lodge before she replied: 'It is an admired, beautiful place.'

'I came,' said he, 'to have your assurance that it suits you.'

'I thank you, my lord.'

'"My lord" would like a short rest, Carinthia.'

She seemed placidly acquiescing. 'You have seen the boy?'

'Twice to-day. We were having a conversation just now.'

'We think him very intelligent.'

'Lady Arpington tells me you do the honours here excellently.'

'She is good to me.'

'Praises the mother's management of the young one. John Edward: Edward for call-name. Madge boasts his power for sleeping.'

'He gives little trouble.'

'And babes repay us! We learn from small things. Out of the mouth of babes wisdom? Well, their habits show the wisdom of the mother. A good mother! There's no higher title. A lady of my acquaintance bids fair to win it, they say.'

Carinthia looked in simplicity, saw herself, and said: 'If a mother may rear her boy till he must go to school, she is rewarded for all she does.'

'Ah,' said he, nodding over her mania of the perpetual suspicion. 'Leddings, Queeney, the servants here, run smoothly?'

'They do: they are happy in serving.'

'You see, we English are not such bad fellows when we're known. The climate to-day, for example, is rather trying.'

'I miss colours most in England,' said Carinthia. 'I like the winds. Now and then we have a day to remember.'

'We're to be "the artist of the day," Gower Woodseer says, and we get an attachment to the dreariest; we are to study "small variations of the commonplace'

—dear me! But he may be right. The "sky of lead and *scraped lead*" over those limes, he points out; and it 's not a bad trick for reconciling us to gloomy English weather. You take lessons from him?'

'I can always learn from him,' said Carinthia.

Fleetwood depicted his plodding Gower at the tussle with account-books. She was earnest in sympathy; not awake to the comical; dull as the clouds, dull as the discourse. Yet he throbbed for being near her: took impression of her figure, the play of her features, the carriage of her body.

He was shut from her eyes. The clear brown eyes gave exchange of looks; less of admission than her honest maid's.

Madge and the miracle infant awaited them on the terrace. For so foreign did the mother make herself to him, that the appearance of the child, their own child, here between them, was next to miraculous; and the mother, who might well have been the most astonished, had transparently not an idea beyond the verified palpable lump of young life she lifted in her arms out of the arms of Madge, maternally at home with its presence on earth.

Demonstrably a fine specimen, a promising youngster. The father was allowed to inspect him. This was his heir: a little fellow of smiles, features, puckered brows of inquiry; seeming a thing made already, and active on his own account.

'Do people see likenesses?' he asked.

'Some do,' said the mother.'

'You?'

She was constrained to give answer. 'There is a likeness to my father, I have thought.'

There 's a dotage of idolatrous daughters, he could have retorted; and his gaze was a polite offer to humdrum reconcilement, if it pleased her.

She sent the child up the steps.

'Do you come in, my lord?'

'The house is yours, my lady.'

'I cannot feel it mine.'

'You are the mistress to invite or exclude.'

'I am ready to go in a few hours, for a small income of money, for my child and me.'

'Our child.'

'Yes.'

'It is our child.'

'It is.'

'Any sum you choose to name. But where would you live?'

'Near my brother I would live.'

'Three thousand a year for pin-money, or more, are at your disposal. Stay here, I beg. You have only to notify your wants. And we 'll talk familiarly now, as we 're together. Can I be of aid to your brother? Tell me, pray. I am disposed in every way to subscribe to your wishes. Pray, speak, speak out.'

So the earl said. He had to force his familiar tone against the rebuke of her grandeur of stature; and he was for inducing her to deliver her mind, that the mountain girl's feebleness in speech might reinstate him.

She rejoined unhesitatingly: 'My brother would not accept aid from you, my lord. I will take no money more than for my needs.'

'You spoke of certain sums down in Wales.'

'I did then.' Her voice was dead.

'Ah! You must be feeling the cold Northwind here.'

'I do not. You may feel the cold, my lord. Will you enter the house?'

'Do you invite me?'

'The house is your own.'

'Will the mistress of the house honour me so far?'

'I am not the mistress of the house, my lord.'

'You refuse, Carinthia?'

'I would keep from using those words. I have no right to refuse the entry of the house to you.'

'If I come in?'

'I guard my rooms.'

She had been awake, then, to the thrusting and parrying behind masked language.

'Good. You are quite decided, I may suppose.'

'I will leave them when I have a little money, or when I know of how I may earn some.'

'The Countess of Fleetwood earning a little money?'

'I can put aside your title, my lord.'

'No, you can't put it aside while the man with the title lives, not even if you're running off in earnest, under a dozen Welsh names. Why should you desire to do it? The title entitles you to the command of half my possessions. As to the house, don't be alarmed; you will not have to guard your rooms. The extraordinary wild animal you—the impression may have been produced; I see, I see. If I were in the house, I should not be raging at your doors; and it is not my intention to enter the house. That is, not by right of ownership. You have my word.'

He bowed to her, and walked to the stables.

She had the art of extracting his word from him.

The word given, she went off with it, disengaged mistress of Esslemont. And she might have the place for residence, but a decent courtesy required that she should remain at the portico until he was out of sight. She was the first out of sight, rather insolently.

She returned him without comment the spell he had cast on her, and he was left to estimate the value of a dinted piece of metal not in the currency, stamped false coin. An odd sense of impoverishment chilled him. Chilly weather was afflicting the whole country, he was reminded, and he paced about hurriedly until his horses were in the shafts. After all, his driving away would be much more expected of him than a stay at the house where the Whitechapel Countess resided, chill, dry, talking the language of early Exercises in English, suitable to her Welshmen. Did she 'Owain' them every one?

As he whipped along the drive and left that glassy stare of Esslemont behind him, there came a slap of a reflection:—here, on the box of this coach, the bride just bursting her sheath sat, and was like warm wax to take impressions. She was like hard stone to retain them, pretty evidently. Like women the world over, she thinks only of her side of the case. Men disdain to plead theirs. Now money is offered her, she declines it. Formerly, she made it the principal subject of her conversation.

Turn the mind to something brighter. Fleetwood strung himself to do so, and became agitated by the question whether the bride sat to left or to right of him when the Southwester blew—a wind altogether preferable to the chill Northeast. Women, when they are no longer warm, are colder than the deadliest catarrh wind

scything across these islands. Of course she sat to left of him. In the line of the main road, he remembered a look he dropped on her, a look over his left shoulder.

She never had a wooing: she wanted it, had a kind of right to it, or the show of it. How to begin? But was she worth an effort? Turn to something brighter. Religion is the one refuge from women, Feltre says:—his Roman Catholic recipe. The old shoemaker, Mr. Woodseer, hauls women into his religion, and purifies them by the process,—fancies he does. He gets them to wear an air. Old Gower, too, has his Religion of Nature, with free admission for women, whom he worships in similes, running away from them, leering sheepishly. No, Feltre's rigid monastic system is the sole haven. And what a world, where we have no safety except in renouncing it! The two sexes created to devour one another must abjure their sex before they gain 'The Peace,' as Feltre says, impressively, if absurdly. He will end a monk if he has the courage of his logic. A queer spectacle—an English nobleman a shaven monk!

Fleetwood shuddered. We are twisted face about to discover our being saved by women from that horror—the joining the ranks of the nasal friars. By what women? Bacchante, clearly, if the wife we have is a Northeaster to wither us, blood, bone, and soul.

He was hungry; he waxed furious with the woman who had flung him out upon the roads. He was thirsty as well. The brighter something to refresh his thoughts grew and glowed in the form of a shiny table, bearing tasty dishes, old wines; at an inn or anywhere. But, out of London, an English inn to furnish the dishes and the wines for a civilized and self-respecting man is

hard to seek, as difficult to find as a perfect skeleton of an extinct species. The earl's breast howled derision of his pursuit when he drew up at the sign of the Royal Sovereign, in the dusky hour, and handed himself desperately to Mrs. Rundles' mercy.

He could not wait for a dinner, so his eating was cold meat. Warned by a sip, that his drinking, if he drank, was to be an excursion in chemical acids, the virtues of an abstainer served for his consolation. Tolerant of tobacco, although he did not smoke, he fronted the fire, envying Gower Woodseer the contemplative pipe, which for half a dozen puffs wafted him to bracing deserts, or primeval forests, or old highways with the swallow thoughts above him, down the Past, into the Future. A pipe is pleasant dreams at command. A pipe is the concrete form of philosophy. Why, then, a pipe is the alternative of a friar's frock for an escape from women. But if one does not smoke! . . . Here and there a man is visibly in the eyes of all men cursed: let him be blest by Fortune; let him be handsome, healthy, wealthy, courted, he is cursed.

Fleetwood lay that night beneath the roof of the Royal Sovereign. Sleep is life's legitimate mate. It will treat us at times as the faithless wife, who becomes a harrying beast, behaves to her lord. He had no sleep. Having put out his candle, an idea took hold of him, and he jumped up to light it again and verify the idea that this room . . . He left the bed and strode round it, going in the guise of an urgent somnambulist, or ghost bearing burden of an imperfectly remembered mission. This was the room.

Reason and cold together overcame his illogical

scruples to lie down on that bed soliciting the sleep desired. He lay and groaned, lay and rolled. All night the Naval Monarch with the loose cheeks and jelly smile of the swinging sign-board creaked. Flaws of the Northeaster swung and banged him. He creaked high, in complaint,—low, in some partial contentment. There was piping of his boatswain, shrill piping—shrieks of the whistle. How many nights had that most ill-fated of brides lain listening to the idiotic uproar! It excused a touch of craziness. But how many? Not one, not two, ten, twenty :—count, count to the exact number of nights the unhappy girl must have heard those mad colloquies of the hurricane boatswain and the chirpy king. By heaven! Whitechapel, after one night of it, beckons as a haven of grace.

## CHAPTER XXXVIII

### A DIP INTO THE SPRING'S WATERS

The night Lord Fleetwood had passed cured him of the wound Carinthia dealt, with her blunt, defensive phrase and her Welshman. Seated on his coach-box, he turned for a look the back way leading to Esslemont, and saw rosed crag and mountain forest rather than the soft undulations of parkland pushing green meadows or brown copse up the slopes under his eye. She had never been courted: she deserved a siege. She was a daughter of the racy highlands. And she, who could say to her husband, 'I guard my rooms,' without

sign of the stage-face of scorn or defiance or flinging of the glove, she would have to be captured by siege, it was clear. She wore an aspect of the confident fortress, which neither challenges nor cries to treat, but commands respect. How did she accomplish this miracle of commanding respect after such a string of somersaults before the London world?

He had to drive Northwestward: his word was pledged to one of his donkey Ixionides—Abrane, he recollected—to be a witness at some contemptible exhibition of the fellow's muscular skill: a match to punt against a Thames waterman this time. Odd how it should come about that the giving of his word forced him now to drive away from the woman once causing him to curse his luck as the prisoner of his word! However, there was to be an end of it soon—a change; change as remarkable as Harry Monmouth's at the touching of his crown. Though in these days, in our jog-trot Old England, half a step on the road to greatness is the utmost we can hop; and all England jeers at the man attempting it. He caps himself with this or that one of their titles. For it is not the popular thing among Englishmen. Their hero, when they have done their fighting, is the wealthy patron of Sport. What sort of creatures are his comrades? But he cannot have comrades unless he is on the level of them. Yet let him be never so high above them, they charge him and point him as a piece of cannon; assenting to the flatteries they puff into him, he is their engine. 'The idol of the hour is the mob's wooden puppet, and the doing of the popular thing seed of no harvest,' Gower Woodseer says, moderately well, snuffing incense of his happy delivery. Not to be the idol, to have an

aim of our own, there lies the truer pride, if we intend respect of ourselves.

The Mr. Pulpit young men have in them, until their habits have fretted him out, was directing Lord Fleetwood's meditations upon the errors of the general man, as a cover for lateral references to his hitherto erratic career: not much worse than a swerving from the right line, which now seemed the desirable road for him, and had previously seemed so stale, so repulsive. He was, of course, only half-conscious of his pulpitizing; he fancied the serious vein of his thoughts attributable to a tumbled night. Nevertheless, he had the question whether that woman—poor girl!—was influencing his thoughts. For in a moment, the very word 'respect' pitched him upon her character; to see it a character that emerged beneath obstacles, and overcame ridicule, won suffrages, won a reluctant husband's admiration, pricked him from distaste to what might really be taste for her companionship, or something more alarming to contemplate in the possibilities,—thirst for it. He was driving away, and he longed to turn back. He did respect her character: a character angular as her features were, and similarly harmonious, splendid in action.

Respect seems a coolish form of tribute from a man who admires. He had to say that he did not vastly respect beautiful women. Have they all the poetry? Know them well, and where is it?

The pupil of Gower Woodseer asked himself to specify the poetry of woman. She is weak and inferior, but she has it; civilized men acknowledge it; and it is independent, or may be beside her gift of beauty. She has more of it than we have. Then name it.

Well, the flowers of the field are frail things. Pluck one, and you have in your hand the frailest of things. But reach through the charm of colour and the tale of its beneficence in frailty to the poetry of the flower, and secret of the myriad stars will fail to tell you more than does that poetry of your little flower. Lord Feltre, at the heels of St. Francis, agrees in that.

Well, then, much so with the flowers of the two hands and feet. We do homage to those ungathered, and reserve our supremacy; the gathered, no longer courted, are the test of men. When the embraced woman breathes respect into us, she wings a beast. We have from her the poetry of the tasted life; excelling any garden-gate or threshold lyrics called forth by purest early bloom. Respect for her person, for her bearing, for her character: that is in the sum a beauty plastic to the civilized young man's needs and cravings, as queenly physical loveliness has never so fully been to him along the walks of life, and as ideal worships cannot be for our nerving contentment. She brings us to the union of body and soul; as good as to say, earth and heaven. Secret of all human aspirations, the ripeness of the creeds, is there; and the passion for the woman desired has no poetry equalling that or the embraced respected woman.

Something of this went reeling through Fleetwood; positively to this end; accompanied the while with flashes of Carinthia, her figure across the varied scenes. Ridicule vanished. Could it ever have existed? If London had witnessed the scene down in Wales, London never again would laugh at the Whitechapel Countess.

He laughed amicably at himself for the citizen sobriety of these views, on the part of a nobleman whose

airy pleasure it had been to flout your sober citizens, with their toad-at-the-hop notions, their walled conceptions, their drab propriety; and felt a petted familiar within him dub all pulpitizing, poetizing drivellers with one of those detested titles, invented by the English as a corrective of their maladies or the excesses of their higher moods. But, reflection telling him that he had done injury to Carinthia—had inflicted the sorest of the wounds a young woman a new bride can endure, he nodded acquiescence to the charge of misbehaviour, and muzzled the cynic.

As a consequence, the truisms flooded him and he lost his guard against our native prosiness. Must we be prosy if we are profoundly, uncynically sincere? Do but listen to the stuff we are maundering! Extracts of poetry, if one could hit upon the right, would serve for a relief and a lift when we are in this ditch of the serious vein. Gower Woodseer would have any number handy to spout. Or Feltre:—your convinced and fervent Catholic has quotations of images and Latin hymns to his Madonna or one of his Catherines, by the dozen, to suit an enthusiastic fit of the worship of some fair woman, and elude the prosy in commending her. Feltre is enviable there. As he says, it is natural to worship, and only the Catholics can prostrate themselves with dignity. That is matter for thought. Stir us to the depths, it will be found that we are poor soupy stuff. For estimable language, and the preservation of self-respect in prostration, we want ritual, ceremonial elevation of the visible object for the soul's adoring through the eye. So may we escape our foul or empty selves.

Lord Feltre seemed to Fleetwood at the moment a

more serviceable friend than Gower Woodseer preaching 'Nature'—an abstraction, not inspiring to the devout poetic or giving us the tongue above our native prosy. He was raised and refreshed by recollected lines of a Gregorian chant he and Feltre had heard together under the roof of that Alpine monastery.

—The Dame collapses. There is little doubt of her having the world to back her in protest against all fine, filmy work of the exploration of a young man's intricacies or cavities. Let her not forget the fact she has frequently impressed upon us, that he was 'the very wealthiest nobleman of his time,' instructive to touch inside as well as out. He had his share of brains, too. And also she should be mindful of an alteration of English taste likely of occurrence in the remote posterity she vows she is for addressing after she has exhausted our present hungry generation. The posterity signified will, it is calculable, it is next to certain, have studied a developed human nature so far as to know the composition of it a not unequal mixture of the philosophic and the romantic, and that credible realism is to be produced solely by an involvement of those two elements. Or else, she may be sure, her story once out of the mouth, goes off dead as the spirits of a vapour that has performed the stroke of energy. She holds a surprising event in the history of 'the wealthiest nobleman of his time,' and she would launch it upon readers unprepared, with the reference to our mysterious and unfathomable nature for an explanation of the stunning crack on the skull. This may do now. It will not do ten centuries hence. For the English, too, are a changeable people in the sight of ulterior Time.

One of the good pieces of work Lord Fleetwood could suppose he had performed was recalled to him near the turning to his mews by the handsome Piccadilly fruit-shop. He jumped to the pavement, merely to gratify Sarah Winch with a word of Madge; and being emotional just then, he spoke of Lady Fleetwood's attachment to Madge; and he looked at Sarah straight, he dropped his voice: 'She said, you remember, you were sisters to her.'

Sarah remembered that he had spoken of it before. Two brilliant drops from the deepest of woman's ready well stood in her eyes.

He carried the light of them away. They were such pure jewels of tribute to the Carinthia now seen by him as worshipping souls of devotees offer to their Madonna for her most glorious adornment.

## CHAPTER XXXIX

### THE RED WARNING FROM A SON OF VAPOUR

Desiring loneliness or else Lord Feltre's company, Fleetwood had to grant a deferred audience at home to various tradesmen, absurdly fussy about having the house of his leased estate of Calesford furnished complete and habitable on the very day stipulated by his peremptory orders that the place should be both habitable and hospitable. They were right, they were excused; grand entertainments of London had been projected, and he fell into the weariful business with them, thinking of Henrietta's insatiable appetite for

the pleasures. He had taken the lease of this burdensome Calesford, at an eight-miles drive from the North-west of town, to gratify the devouring woman's taste: which was, to have all the luxuries of the town in a framework of country scenery.

Gower Woodseer and he were dining together in the evening. The circumstance was just endurable, but Gower would play the secretary, and doggedly subjected him to hear a statement of the woeful plight of Countess Livia's affairs. Gower, commissioned to examine them, remarked: 'If we have all the figures!'

'If we could stop the bleeding!' Fleetwood replied. 'Come to the Opera to-night; I promised. I promised Abrane for to-morrow. There's no end to it. This gambling mania's a flux. Not one of them except your old enemy, Corby, keeps clear of it; and they're at him for subsidies, as they are at me, and would be at you or any passenger on the road suspected of a purse. Corby shines among them.'

That was heavy judgment enough, Gower thought. No allusion to Esslemont ensued. The earl ate sparely, and silently for the most part.

He was warmed a little at the Opera by hearing Henrietta's honest raptures over her Columelli in the *Pirata*. But Lord Brailstone sat behind her, and their exchange of ecstasies upon the tattered pathos of

*E il mio tradito amor,*

was not moderately offensive.

His countenance in Henrietta's presence had to be studied and interpreted by Livia. Why did it darken? The demurest of fuliginous intriguers argued that Brailstone was but doing the spiriting required of him, and

would have to pay the penalty unrewarded, let him Italianize as much as he pleased. Not many months longer, and there would be the bit of an outburst, the whiff of scandal, perhaps a shot, and the rupture of an improvident alliance, followed by Henrietta's free hand to the moody young earl, who would then have possession of the only woman he could ever love: and at no cost. Jealousy of a man like Brailstone, however infatuated the man, was too foolish. He must perceive how matters were tending? The die-away and eyeballs-at-the-ceiling of a pair of fanatics *per la musica* might irritate a husband, but the lover should read and know. Giddy as the beautiful creature deprived of her natural aliment seems in her excusable hunger for it, she has learnt her lesson, she is not a reeling libertine.

Brailstone peered through his eyelashes at the same shadow of a frown where no frown sat on his friend's brows. Displeasure was manifest, and why? Fleetwood had given him the dispossessing shrug of the man out of the run, and the hint of the tip for winning, with the aid of operatic arias; and though he was in Fleetwood's books ever since the prize-fight, neither Fleetwood nor the husband nor any skittishness of a timorous wife could stop the pursuer bent to capture the fairest and most inflaming woman of her day.

'I prefer your stage Columelli,' Fleetwood said.

'I come from exile!' said Henrietta; and her plea in excuse of ecstatics wrote her down as confessedly treasonable to the place quitted.

Ambrose Mallard entered the box, beholding only his goddess Livia. Their eyebrows and inaudible lips conversed eloquently. He retired like a trumped card

on the appearance of M. de St. Ombre. The courtly Frenchman won the ladies to join him in whipping the cream of the world for five minutes, and passed out before his flavour was exhausted. Brailstone took his lesson and departed, to spy at them from other boxes and heave an inflated shirt-front. Young Cressett, the bottle of effervescence, dashed in, and for him Livia's face was motherly. He rattled a tale of the highway robbery of Sir Meeson Corby on one of his Yorkshire moors. The picture of the little baronet arose upon the narration, and it amused. Chumley Potts came to 'confirm every item,' as he said. 'Plucked Corby clean. Pistol at his head. Quite old style. Time, ten P.M. Suspects Great Britain, King, Lords and Commons, and buttons twenty times tighter. Brosey Mallard down on him for a few fighting men. Perfect answer to Brosey.'

'Mr. Mallard did not mention the robbery,' Henrietta remarked.

'Feared to shock: Corby such a favoured swain,' Potts accounted for the omission.

'Brosey spilling last night?' Fleetwood asked.

'At the palazzo, we were,' said Potts. 'Luck pretty fair first off. Brosey did his trick, and away and away and away went he! More old Brosey wins, the wiser he gets. I stayed.' He swung to Gower: 'Don't drink dry Sillery after two A.M. You read me?'

'Egyptian, but decipherable,' said Gower.

The rising of the curtain drew his habitual groan from Potts, and he fled to collogue with the goodly number of honest fellows in the house of music who detested 'squallery.' Most of these afflicted pilgrims to the London conservatory were engaged upon the

business of the Goddess richly inspiring the Heliconian choir, but rendering the fountain-waters heady. Here they had to be, if they would enjoy the spectacle of London's biggest and choicest bouquet: and in them, too, there was an unattached air during Potts' cooling discourse of turf and tables, except when he tossed them a morsel of tragedy, or the latest joke, not yet past the full gallop on its course. Their sparkle was transient; woman had them fast. Compelled to think of them as not serious members of our group, he assisted at the crush-room exit, and the happy riddance of the beautiful cousins dedicated to the merry London midnights' further pastures.

Fleetwood's word was extracted, that he would visit the 'palazzo' within a couple of hours.

Potts exclaimed: 'Good. You promise. Hang me, if I don't think it's the only certain thing a man can depend upon in this world.'

He left the earl and Gower Woodseer to their lunatic talk. He still had his ideas about the association of the pair. 'Hard-headed player of his own game, that Woodseer, spite of his Mumbo-Jumbo-oracle kind of talk.'

Mallard's turn of luck downward to the deadly drop had come under Potts' first inspection of the table. Admiring his friend's audacity, deploring his rashness, reproving his persistency, Potts allowed his verdict to go by results; for it was clear that Mallard and Fortune were in opposition. Something like real awe of the tremendous encounter kept him from a plunge or a bet. Mallard had got the vertigo, he reported the gambler's launch on dementedness to the earl. Gower's less experienced optics perceived it. The

plainly doomed duellist with the insensible Black Goddess offered her all the advantages of the Immortals challenged by flesh. His effort to smile was a line cut awry in wood; his big eyes were those of a cat for sociability; he looked cursed, and still he wore the smile. In this condition, the gambler runs to emptiness of everything he has, his money, his heart, his brains, like a coal-truck on the incline of the rails to a collier.

Mallard applied to the earl for a loan of fifty guineas. He had them and lost them, and he came, not begging, blustering for a second supply; quite in the wrong tone, Potts knew. Fleetwood said: 'Back it with pistols, Brosey;' and, as Potts related subsequently, 'Old Brosey had the look of a staked horse.'

Fortune and he having now closed the struggle, perforce of his total disarmament, he regained the wits we forfeit when we engage her. He said to his friend Chummy: 'Abrane to-morrow? Ah, yes, punts a Thames waterman. Start of—how many yards? Sunbury-Walton: good reach. Course of two miles: Braney in good training. Straight business? I mayn't be there. But you, Chummy, you mind, old Chums, all cases of the kind, safest back the professional. Unless—you understand!'

Fleetwood could not persuade Gower to join the party. The philosopher's pretext of much occupation masked a bashfully sentimental dislike of the flooding of quiet country places by the city's hordes. 'You 're right, right,' said Fleetwood, in sympathy, resigned to the prospect of despising his associates without a handy helper. He named Esslemont once, shot up a look at the sky, and glanced it Eastward.

Three coaches were bound for Sunbury from a common starting-point at nine of the morning. Lord Fleetwood, Lord Brailstone, and Lord Simon Pitscrew were the whips. Two hours in advance of them, the earl's famous purveyors of picnic feasts bowled along to pitch the riverside tent and spread the tables. Our upper and lower London world reported the earl as out on another of his expeditions: and, say what we will, we must think kindly of a wealthy nobleman ever to the front to enliven the town's dusty eyes and increase Old England's reputation for pre-eminence in the Sports. He is the husband of the Whitechapel Countess—got himself into that mess; but whatever he does, he puts the stamp of style on it. He and the thing he sets his hand to, they're neat, they're finished, they're fitted to trot together, and they've a shining polish, natural, like a lily of the fields; or say Nature and Art, like the coat of a thoroughbred led into the paddock by his groom, if you're of that mind.

Present at the start in Piccadilly, Gower took note of Lord Fleetwood's military promptitude to do the work he had no taste for, and envied the self-compression which could assume so pleasant an air. He heard here and there crisp comments on his lordship's coach and horses and personal smartness; the word 'style,' which reflects handsomely on the connoisseur conferring it, and the question whether one of the ladies up there was the countess. His task of unearthing and disentangling the monetary affairs of 'one of the ladies' compelled the wish to belong to the party soon to be towering out of the grasp of bricks, and delightfully gay, spirited, quick for fun. A fellow, he thought, may brood upon Nature, but the real children of nature—or

she loves them best—are those who have the careless chatter, the ready laugh, bright welcome for a holiday. In catching the hour, we are surely the bloom of the hour? Why, yes, and no need to lose the rosy wisdom of the children when we wrap ourselves in the patched old cloak of the man's.

On he went to his conclusions; but the Dame will have none of them, though here was a creature bent on masonry-work in his act of thinking, to build a traveller's-rest for thinkers behind him; while the volatile were simply breaking their bubbles.

He was discontented all day, both with himself and the sentences he coined. A small street-boy at his run along the pavement nowhither, distanced him altogether in the race for the great Secret; precipitating the thought, that the conscious are too heavily handicapped. The unburdened unconscious win the goal. Ay, but they leave no legacy. So we must fret and stew, and look into ourselves, and seize the brute and scourge him, just to make one serviceable step forward: that is, utter a single sentence worth the pondering for guidance.

Gower imagined the fun upon middle Thames: the vulcan face of Captain Abrane; the cries of his backers, the smiles of the ladies, Lord Fleetwood's happy style in the teeth of tattle—an Aurora's chariot for overriding it. One might hope, might almost see, that he was coming to his better senses on a certain subject. As for style overriding the worst of indignities, has not Scotia given her poet to the slack dependant of the gallows-tree, who so rantingly played his jig and wheeled it round in the shadow of that institution? Style was his, he hit on the right style to top the situa-

tion, and perpetually will he slip his head out of the noose to dance the poet's verse.

In fact, style is the mantle of greatness; and say that the greatness is beyond our reach, we may at least pray to have the mantle.

Strangest of fancies, most unphilosophically Gower conceived a woman's love as that which would bestow the gift upon a man so bare of it as he. Where was the woman? He embraced the idea of the sex, and found it resolving to a form of one. He stood humbly before the one, and she waned into swarms of her sisters. So did she charge him with the loving of her sex, not her. And could it be denied, if he wanted a woman's love just to give him a style? No, not that, but to make him feel proud of himself. That was the heart's way of telling him a secret in owning to a weakness. Within it the one he had thought of forthwith obtained her lodgement. He discovered this truth, in this roundabout way, and knew it a truth by the warm fireside glow the contemplation of her cast over him.

Dining alone, as he usually had to do, he was astonished to see the earl enter his room.

'Ah, you always make the right choice!' Fleetwood said, and requested him to come to the library when he had done eating.

Gower imagined an accident. A metallic ring was in the earl's voice.

One further mouthful finished dinner, for Gower was anxious concerning the ladies. He joined the earl and asked.

'Safe. Oh yes. We managed to keep it from them,' said Fleetwood. 'Nothing particular, perhaps you'll

think. Poor devil of a fellow! Father and mother alive, too! He did it out of hearing, that's one merit. Mallard: Ambrose Mallard. He has blown his brains out.'

Seated plunged in the armchair, with stretched legs and eyes at the black fire-grate, Fleetwood told of the gathering under the tent, and Mallard seen, seen drinking champagne; Mallard no longer seen, not missed.

'He killed himself three fields off. He must have been careful to deaden the sound. Small pocket-pistol hardly big enough to—but anything serves. Couple of brats came running up to Chummy Potts:—'Gentleman's body bloody in a ditch.' Chummy came to me, and we went. Clean dead;—in the mouth, pointed up; hole through the top of the skull. We're crockery! crockery! I had to keep Chummy standing. I couldn't bring him back to our party. We got help at a farm; the body lies there. And that's not the worst. We found a letter to me in his pocket pencilled—his last five minutes. I don't see what he could have done except to go. I can't tell you more. I had to keep my face, rowing and driving back. "But where is Mr. Potts? Where can Mr. Mallard be?" Queer sensation, to hear the ladies ask! Give me your hand.'

The earl squeezed Gower's hand an instant; and it was an act unknown for him to touch or bear a touch; it said a great deal.

Late at night he mounted to Gower's room. The funeral of the day's impressions had not been shaken off. He kicked at it and sunk under it as his talk rambled. 'Add five thousand,' he commented, on the spread of Livia's papers over the table. 'I've been having an hour with her. Two thousand more, she says.

Better multiply by two and a half for a woman's confession. We have to trust to her for some of the debts of honour. See her in the morning. No one masters her but you. Mind, the first to be clear of must be St. Ombre. I like the fellow; but these Frenchmen—they don't spare women. Ambrose,'—the earl's eyelids quivered.—'Jealousy fired that shot. Quite groundless. She's cool as a marble Venus, as you said. Go straight from her house to Esslemont. I don't plead a case. Make the best account you can of it. Say—you may say my eyes are opened. I respect her. If you think that says little, say more. It can't mean more. Whatever the Countess of Fleetwood may think due to her, let her name it. Say my view of life, way of life, everything in me, has changed. I shall follow you. I don't expect to march over the ground. She has a heap to forgive. Her father owns or boasts, in that book of his Rose Mackrell lent me, he never forgave an injury.'

Gower helped the quotation, rubbing his hands over it, for cover of his glee at the words he had been hearing. 'Never forgave an injury without a return blow for it. The blow forgives. Good for the enemy to get it. He called his hearty old Pagan custom "an action of the lungs" with him. And it's not in nature for injuries to digest in us. They poison the blood, if we try. But then, there's a manner of hitting back. It is not to go an inch beyond the exact measure, Captain Kirby warns us.'

Fleetwood sighed down to a low groan.

'Lord Feltre would have an answer for you. She's a wife; and a wife hitting back is not a pleasant—well, petticoats make the difference. If she's for

amends, she shall exact them; and she may be hard to satisfy, she shall have her full revenge. Call it by any other term you like. I did her a wrong. I don't defend myself; it 's not yet in the Law Courts. I beg to wipe it out, rectify it—choose your phrase—to the very fullest. I look for the alliance with her to . . .'

He sprang up and traversed the room: 'We 're all guilty of mistakes at starting: I speak of men. Women are protected; and if they 're not, there 's the convent for them, Feltre says. But a man has to live it on before the world; and this life, with these flies of fellows . . . I fell into it in some way. Absolutely like the first bird I shot as a youngster, and stood over the battered head and bloody feathers, wondering! There was Ambrose Mallard—the same splintered bones—blood—come to his end; and for a woman; that woman the lady bearing the title of half-mother to me. God help me! What are my sins? She feels nothing, or about as much as the mortuary paragraph of the newspapers, for the dead man; and I have Ambrose Mallard's look at her and St. Ombre talking together, before he left the tent to cross the fields. Borrow, beg, or steal for money to play for her! and not a glimpse of the winning post. St. Ombre's a cool player; that 's at the bottom of the story. He 's cool because play doesn't bite him, as it did Ambrose. I should say the other passion has never bitten him. And he 's alive and presentable; Ambrose under a sheet, with Chummy Potts to watch. Chummy cried like a brat in the street for his lost mammy. I left him crying and sobbing. They have their feelings, these "children of vapour," as you call them. But how did I fall into the line with a set I despised? She had

my opinion of her gamblers, and retorted that young Cressett's turn for the fling is my doing. I can't swear it's not. There's one of my sins. What's to wipe them out! She has a tender feeling for the boy; confessed she wanted governing. Why, she's young, in a way. She has that particular vice of play. She might be managed. Here's a lesson for her! Don't you think she might? The right man,—the man she can respect, fancy incorruptible! He must let her see he has an eye for tricks. She's not responsible for—his mad passion was the cause, cause of everything he did. The kind of woman to send the shaft. You called her "Diana Seated." You said, "She doesn't hunt, she sits and lets fly her arrow." Well, she showed feeling for young Cressett, and her hit at me was an answer. It struck me on the mouth. But she's an eternal anxiety. A man she respects! A man to govern her!'

Fleetwood hurried his paces. 'I couldn't have allowed poor Ambrose. Besides, he had not a chance—never had in anything. It wants a head, wants the man who can say no to her. "The Reveller's Aurora," you called her. She has her beauty, yes. She respects you. I should be relieved—a load off me! Tell her, all debts paid; fifty thousand invested, in her name and her husband's. Tell her, speak it, there's my consent—if only the man to govern her! She has it from me, but repeat it, *as from me*. That sum and her portion would make a fair income for the two. Relieved? By heaven, what a relief! Go early. Coach to Esslemont at eleven. Do my work there. I haven't to repeat my directions. I shall present myself two days after. I wish Lady Fleetwood to do the part of hostess at Calesford. Tell her I depute you to kiss my son for me. Now I leave

you. Good night. I shan't sleep. I remember your saying, "bad visions come *under* the eyelids." I shall keep mine open and read—read her father's book of the Maxims; I generally find two or three at a dip to stimulate. No wonder she venerates him. That sort of progenitor is your "permanent aristocracy." Hard enemy. She must have some of her mother in her, too. Abuse me to her, admit the justice of reproaches, but say, reason, good feeling—I needn't grind at it. Say I respect her. Advise her to swallow the injury—not intended for insult. I don't believe anything higher than respect can be offered to a woman. No defence of me to her, but I'll tell *you*, that when I undertook to keep my word with her, I plainly said—never mind; good night. If we meet in the morning, let this business rest until it's done. I must drive to help poor Chums and see about the Inquest.'

Fleetwood nodded from the doorway. Gower was left with humming ears.

## CHAPTER XL

### A RECORD OF MINOR INCIDENTS

They went to their beds doomed to lie and roam as the solitaries of a sleepless night. They met next day like a couple emerging from sirocco deserts, indisposed for conversation or even short companionship, much of the night's dry turmoil in their heads. Each would have preferred the sight of an enemy; and it was hardly concealed by them, for they inclined to regard

one another as the author of their infernal passage through the drear night's wilderness.

Fleetwood was the civiller; his immediate prospective duties being clear, however abhorrent. But he had inflicted a monstrous disturbance on the man he meant in his rash, decisive way to elevate, if not benefit. Gower's imagination, foreign to his desires and his projects, was playing juggler's tricks with him, dramatizing upon hypotheses, which mounted in stages and could pretend to be soberly conceivable, assuming that the earl's wild hints overnight were a credible basis. He transported himself to his first view of the Countess Livia, the fountain of similes born of his prostrate adoration, close upon the invasion and capture of him by the combined liqueurs in the giddy Baden lights; and joining the Arabian magic in his breast at the time with the more magical reality now proposed as a sequel to it, he entered the land where dreams confess they are outstripped by revelations.

Yet it startled him to hear the earl say: 'You 'll get audience at ten; I 've arranged; make the most of the situation to her. I refuse to help. I foresee it 's the only way of solving this precious puzzle. You do me and every one of us a service past paying. Not a man of her set worth . . . She—but you 'll stop it; no one else can. Of course, you 've had your breakfast. Off, and walk yourself into a talkative mood, as you tell me you do.'

'One of the things I do when I 've nobody to hear,' said Gower, speculating whether the black sprite in this young nobleman was for sending him as a rod to scourge the lady: an ingenious device, that smelt of mediæval Courts and tickled his humour.

'Will she listen?' he said gravely.

'She will listen; she has not to learn you admire. You admit she has helped to trim and polish, and the rest. She declares you're incorruptible. There's the ground open. I fling no single sovereign more into that quicksand, and I want not one word further on the subject. I follow you to Esslemont. Pray, go.'

Fleetwood pushed into the hall. A footman was ordered to pack and deposit Mr. Woodseer's portmanteau at the coach-office.

'The principal point is to make sure we have all the obligations,' Gower said.

'You know the principal point,' said the earl. 'Relieve me.'

He faced to the opening street door. Lord Feltre stood in the framing of it—a welcome sight. The 'monastic man of fashion,' of Gower's phrase for him, entered, crooning condolences, with a stretched waxen hand for his friend, a partial nod for nature's worshipper—inefficient at any serious issue of our human affairs, as the earl would now discover.

Gower left the two young noblemen to their greetings. Happily for him, philosophy, in the present instance, after a round of profundities, turned her lantern upon the comic aspect of his errand. Considering the Countess Livia, and himself, and the tyrant, who benevolently and providentially, or sardonically, hurled them to their interview, the situation was comic, certainly, in the sense of its being an illumination of this life's odd developments. For thus had things come about, that if it were possible even to think of the lady's condescending, he, thanks to the fair one he would see before evening, was armed and proof against his old

infatuation or any renewal of it. And he had been taught to read through the beautiful twilighted woman, as if she were burnt paper held at the fire consuming her. His hopes hung elsewhere. Nevertheless, an intellectual demon-imp very lively in his head urged him to speculate on such a contest between them, and weigh the engaging forces. Difficulties were perceived, the scornful laughter on her side was plainly heard; but his feeling of savage mastery, far from beaten down, swelled so as to become irritable for the trial; and when he was near her house he held a review of every personal disadvantage he could summon, incited by an array of limping deficiencies that flattered their arrogant leader with ideas of the power he had in spite of them.

In fact, his emancipation from sentiment inspired the genial mood to tease. Women, having to encounter a male adept at the weapon for the purpose, must be either voluble or supportingly proud to keep the skin from shrinking: which is a commencement of the retrogression; and that has frequently been the beginning of a rout. Now the Countess Livia was a lady of queenly pose and the servitorial conventional speech likely at a push to prove beggarly. When once on a common platform with a man of agile tongue instigated by his intellectual demon to pursue inquiries into her moral resources, after a ruthless exposure of the wrecked material, she would have to be, after the various fashions, defiant, if she was to hold her own against pressure; and seeing, as she must, the road of prudence point to conciliation, it was calculable that she would take it. Hence a string of possible events, astounding to mankind, but equally calculable, should one care to

give imagination headway. Gower looked signally Captain Abrane's 'fiddler' while he waited at Livia's house door. A studious intimacy with such a lady was rather like the exposure of the silver moon to the astronomer's telescope.

The Dame will have nought of an interview and colloquy not found mentioned in her collection of ballads, concerning a person quite secondary in Dr. Glossop's voluminous papers. She as vehemently prohibits a narration of Gower Woodseer's proposal some hours later, for the hand of the Countess of Fleetwood's transfixed maid Madge, because of the insignificance of the couple; and though it was a quaint idyll of an affection slowly formed, rationally based while seeming preposterous, tending to bluntly funny utterances on both sides. The girl was a creature of the enthusiasms, and had lifted that passion of her constitution into higher than the worship of sheer physical bravery. She had pitied Mr. Gower Woodseer for his apparently extreme, albeit reverential, devotion to her mistress. The plainly worded terms of his asking a young woman of her position and her reputation to marry him came on her like an instrument of dazzling day upon the closed eyelids of the night, requiring time, and her mistress's consent, and his father's expressed approval, before she could yield him an answer that might appear a forgetfulness of her station, her ignorance, her damaged character. Gower protested himself, with truth, a spotted pard, an ignoramus, and an outcast of all established classes, as the worshipper of Nature cannot well avoid being.

'But what is it you like me for, Mr. Gower?' Madge longed to know, that she might see a way

in the strange land where he had planted her after a whirl; and he replied: 'I've thought of you till I can say I love you because you have naturally everything I shoot at.'

The vastness of the compliment drove her to think herself empty of anything.

He named courage, and its offspring, honesty, and devotedness, constancy. Her bosom rose at the word.

'Yes, constancy,' he repeated; and growing girls have to "turn corners," as you told me once.'

'I did?' said she, reddening under a memory, and abashed by his recollection of a moment she knew to have been weak with her, or noisy of herself.

Madge went straightway to her mistress and related her great event, in the tone of a confession of crime. Her mistress's approbation was timidly suggested rather than besought.

It came on a flood. Carinthia's eyes filled; she exclaimed: 'Oh, that good man!—he chooses my Madge for wife. She said it, Rebecca said it. Mrs. Wythan saw and said Mr. Woodseer loved my Madge. I hear her saying it. Then yes, and yes, from me for both your sakes, dear girl. He will have the faithfullest, he will have the kindest—Oh! and I shall know there can be a happy marriage in England.'

She summoned Gower; she clasped his hand, to thank him for appreciating her servant and sister, and for the happiness she had in hearing it; and she gazed at him and the laden brows of her Madge alternately, encouraging him to repeat his recital of his pecuniary means, for the poetry of the fact it verified, feasting on the sketch of a four-roomed cottage and an agricultural labourer's widow for cook and housemaid; Madge to

listen to his compositions of the day in the evening; Madge to praise him, Madge to correct his vanity.

Love was out of the count, but Carinthia's leaping sympathy decorated the baldness of the sketch and spied his features through the daubed mask he chose to wear as a member of the order of husbands, without taking it for his fun. Dry material statements presented the reality she doted to think of. Moreover, the marriage of these two renewed her belief in true marriages, and their intention to unite was evidence of love.

'My journey to England was worth all troubles for the meeting Madge,' she said. 'I can look with pleasure to that day of my meeting her first—the day, it was then!'

She stopped. Madge felt the quivering upward of a whimper to a sob in her breast. She slipped away.

'It 's a day that has come round to be repaired, Lady Fleetwood,' said Gower. 'If you will. Will you not? He has had a blow—the death of a friend, violent death. It has broken him. He wants a month or so in your mountains. I have thought him hard to deal with; he is humane. His enormous wealth has been his tempter. Madge and I will owe him our means of livelihood, enough for cottagers, until I carve my way. His feelings are much more independent of his rank than those of most noblemen. He will repeat your kind words to Madge and me; I am sure of it. He has had heavy burdens; he is young, hardly formed yet. He needs a helper; I mean, one allied to him. You forgive me? I left him with a Catholic lord for comforter, who regards my prescript of the study of Nature, when we 're in grief, as about the same as an offer of a dish of cold

boiled greens. Silver and ivory images are more consoling. Neither he nor I can offer the right thing for Lord Fleetwood. It will be found here. And then your mountains. More than I, nearly as much as you, he has a poet's ardour for mountain land. He and Mr. Wythan would soon learn to understand one another on that head, if not as to management of mines.'

The pleading was crafty, and it was penetrative in the avoidance of stress. Carinthia shook herself to feel moved. The endeavour chilled her to a notion that she was but half alive. She let the question approach her, whether Chillon could pardon Lord Fleetwood. She, with no idea of benignness, might speak pardon's word to him, on a late autumn evening years hence, perhaps, or to his friends to-morrow, if he would considerately keep distant. She was upheld by the thought of her brother's more honourable likeness to their father, in the certainty of his refusal to speak pardon's empty word or touch an offending hand, without their father's warrant for the injury wiped out; and as she had no wish for that to be done, she could anticipate his withholding of the word.

For her brother at wrestle with his fallen fortunes was now the beating heart of Carinthia's mind. Her husband was a shadow there. He did obscure it, and he might annoy, he was unable to set it in motion. He sat there somewhat like Youth's apprehension of Death:—the dark spot seen mistily at times through people's tears, or visioned as in an ambush beyond the hills; occasionally challenged to stimulate recklessness; oftener overlooked, acknowledged for the undesired remote of life's conditions, life's evil, fatal, ill-assorted yokefellow; and if it was in his power to burst out

of his corner and be terrible to her, she could bring up a force unnamed and unmeasured, that being the blood of her father in her veins. Having done her utmost to guard her babe, she said her prayers; she stood for peace or the struggle.

'Does Lord Fleetwood speak of coming here?' she said.

'To-morrow.'

'I go to Croridge to-morrow.'

'Your ladyship returns?'

'Yes, I return. Mr. Gower, you have fifty minutes before you dress for dinner.'

He thought only of the exceeding charity of the intimation; and he may be excused for his not seeing the feminine full answer it was, in an implied, unmeditated contrast. He went gladly to find his new comrade, his flower among grass-blades, the wonderful creature astonishing him and surcharging his world by setting her face at him, opening her breast to him, breathing a young man's word of words from a woman's mouth. His flower among grass-blades for a head looking studiously down, she was his fountain of wisdom as well, in the assurance she gave him of the wisdom of his choice.

But Madge had put up the 'prize-fighter's lass,' by way of dolly defence, to cover her amazed confusion when the proposal of this well-liked gentleman to a girl such as she sounded churchy. He knocked it over easily; it left, however, a bee at his ear and an itch to transfer the buzzer's attentions and tease his darling; for she had betrayed herself as right good game. Nor is there happier promise of life-long domestic enlivenment for a prescient man of Letters than he has in the

contemplation of a pretty face showing the sensitiveness to the sting, which is not allowed to poison her temper, and is short of fetching tears. The dear innocent girl gave this pleasing promise; moreover, she could be twisted to laugh at herself, just a little. Now, the young woman who can do that has already jumped the hedge into the highroad of philosophy, and may become a philosopher's mate in its by-ways, where the minute discoveries are the notable treasures.

They had their ramble, agreeable to both, despite the admonitory dose administered to one of them. They might have been espied at a point or two from across the park-palings; their laughter would have caught an outside pedestrian's hearing. Whatever the case, Owain Wythan, riding down off Croridge, big with news of her brother for the countess, dined at her table, and walking up the lane to the Esslemont Arms on a moonless night, to mount his horse, pitched against an active and, as it was deemed by Gower's observation of his eyes, a scientific fist. The design to black them finely was attributable to the dyeing accuracy of the stroke. A single blow had done it. Mr. Wythan's watch and purse were untouched; and a second look at the swollen blind peepers led Gower to surmise that they were, in the calculation of the striker, his own.

He walked next day to the Royal Sovereign inn. There he came upon the earl driving his phaeton. Fleetwood jumped down, and Gower told of the mysterious incident, as the chief thing he had to tell, not rendering it so mysterious in his narrative style. He had the art of indicating darkly.

'Ines, you mean?' Fleetwood cried, and he appeared as nauseated and perplexed as he felt. Why should

Ines assault Mr. Wythan? It happened that the pugilist's patron had, within the last fifteen minutes, driven past a certain thirty-acre meadow, sight of which on his way to Carinthia had stirred him. He had even then an idea of his old deeds dogging him to bind him, every one of them, the smallest.

'But you've nothing to go by,' he said. 'Why guess at this rascal more than another.'

Gower quoted Mrs. Rundles and the ostler for witnesses to Kit's visit yesterday to the Royal Sovereign, though Kit shunned the bar of the Esslemont Arms.

'I guess pretty clearly, because I suspect he was hanging about and saw me and Madge together.'

'Consolations for failures in town?—by the way, you are complimented, and I don't think you deserved it. However, there was just the chance to stop a run to perdition. But, Madge? Madge? I'd swear to the girl!'

'Not so hard as I,' said Gower, and spoke of the oath to come between the girl and him.

Fleetwood's dive into the girl's eyes drew her before him. He checked a spirt of exclamations.

'You fancy the brute had a crack for revenge and mistook his man?'

'That's what I want her ladyship to know,' said Gower.

'How could you let her hear of it?'

'Nothing can be concealed from her.'

The earl was impressionable to the remark, in his disgust at the incident. It added a touch of a new kind of power to her image.

'She's aware of my coming?'

'To-day or to-morrow.'

They scaled the phaeton and drove.

'You undervalue Lord Feltre. You avoid your adversaries,' Fleetwood now rebuked his hearer. 'It's an easy way to have the pull of them in your own mind. You might learn from him. He's willing for controversy. Nature-worship—or "aboriginal genuflexion," he calls it; Anglicanism, Methodism; he stands to engage them. It can't be doubted, that in days of trouble he has a faith "stout as a rock, with an oracle in it," as he says; and he's right,—"men who go into battle require a rock to back them or a staff to lean on." You have your "secret," you think; as far as I can see, it's to keep you from going into any form of battle.'

The new influence at work on the young nobleman was evident, if only in the language used.

Gower answered mildly: 'That can hardly be said of a man who's going to marry.'

'Perhaps not. Lady Fleetwood is aware?'

'Lady Fleetwood does me the honour to approve my choice.'

'You mean, you're dead on to it with this girl?'

'For a year and more.'

'Fond of her?'

'All my heart.'

'In love!'

'Yes, in love. The proof of it is, I've asked her now I can support her as a cottager leaning on the Three Per Cents.'

'Well, it helps you to a human kind of talk. It carries out your theories. I never disbelieved in your honesty. The wisdom's another matter. Did you ever tell any one, that there's not an act of a man's life lies dead behind him, but it is blessing or cursing him every step he takes?'

'By that,' rejoined Gower, 'I can say Lord Feltre proves there 's wisdom in the truisms of devoutness.'

He thought the Catholic lord had gone a step or two to catch an eel.

Fleetwood was looking on the backward of his days, beholding a melancholy sunset, with a grimace in it.

'Lord Feltre might show you the "leanness of Philosophy";—you would learn from hearing him:—"an old gnawed bone for the dog that chooses to be no better than a dog."'

'The vertiginous roast haunch is recommended,' Gower said.

'See a higher than your own head, good sir. But, hang the man! he manages to hit on the thing he wants.' Fleetwood set his face at Gower with cutting heartiness. 'In love, you say, and Madge: and mean it to be the holy business! Well, poor old Chummy always gave you credit for knowing how to play your game. She has given proof she 's a good girl. I don't see why it shouldn't end well. That attack on the Welshman 's the bad lookout. Explained, if you like, but women's impressions won't get explained away. We must down on our knees or they. Her ladyship attentive at all to affairs of the house?'

'Every day with Queeney; at intervals with Leddings.'

'Excellent! You speak like a fellow recording the devout observances of a great dame with her minor and superior ecclesiastical comforters. Regular at church?'

'Her ladyship goes.'

'A woman without religion, Gower Woodseer, is a weed on the water, or she 's hard as nails. We shall

see. Generally, Madge and the youngster parade the park at this hour. I drive round to the stables. Go in and offer your version of that rascally dog's trick. It seems the nearest we can come at. He 's a sot, and drunken dogs 'll do anything. I 've had him on my hands, and I 've got the stain of him.'

They trotted through Esslemont Park gates. 'I 've got that place, Calesford, on my hands, too,' the earl said, suddenly moved to a liking for his Kentish home.

He and Gower were struck by a common thought of the extraordinary burdens his indulgence in impulses drew upon him. Present circumstances pictured to Gower the opposing weighed and matured good reason for his choosing Madge, and he complimented himself in his pity for the earl. But Fleetwood, as he reviewed a body of acquaintances perfectly free from the wretched run in harness, though they had their fits and their whims, was pushed to the conclusion that fatalism marked his particular course through life. He could not hint at such an idea to the unsympathetic fellow, or rather, the burly antagonist to anything of the sort, beside him. Lord Feltre would have understood and appreciated it instantly. Where is aid to be had if we have the Fates against us? Feltre knew the Power, he said; was an example of 'the efficacy of supplications'; he had been 'fatally driven to find the Power,' and had found it—on the road to Rome, of course: not a delectable road for an English nobleman, except that the noise of another convert in pilgrimage on it would deal our English world a lively smack, the very stroke that heavy body wants. But the figure of a 'monastic man of fashion' was antipathetic to the earl, and he flouted an English Protestant mass merely because of

his being highly individual, and therefore revolutionary for the minority.

He cast his bitter cud aside. 'My man should have arrived. Lady Fleetwood at home?'

Gower spoke of her having gone to Croridge in the morning.

'Has she taken the child?'

'She has, yes. For the air of the heights.'

'For greater security. Lady Arpington praises the thoughtful mother. I rather expected to see the child.'

'They can't be much later,' Gower supposed.

'You don't feel your long separation from "the object"?'

Letting him have his cushion for pins, Gower said: 'It needs all my philosophy.'

He was pricked and probed for the next five minutes; not bad rallying, the earl could be smart when he smarted. Then they descended the terrace to meet Lady Fleetwood driving her pony-trap. She gave a brief single nod to the salute of her lord, quite in the town-lady's manner, surprisingly.

## CHAPTER XLI

### IN WHICH THE FATES ARE SEEN AND A CHOICE OF THE REFUGES FROM THEM

The home of husband and wife was under one roof at last. Fleetwood went, like one deported, to his wing

of the house, physically sensible, in the back turned to his wife's along the corridor, that our ordinary comparison for the division of a wedded twain is correct. She was Arctic, and Antarctic he had to be, perforce of the distance she put between them. A removal of either of them from life—or from 'the act of breathing,' as Gower Woodseer's contempt of the talk about death would call it—was an imaginable way of making it a wider division. Ambrose Mallard was far enough from his fatal lady now—farther than the Poles asunder. Ambrose, if the clergy will allow him, has found his peace. But the road and the means he chose were a madman's.

The blotting of our character, to close our troubles, is the final proof of our being 'sons of vapour,' according to Gower Woodseer's heartless term for poor Ambrose and the lot. They have their souls; and above philosophy, 'natural' or unnatural, they may find a shelter. They can show in their desperation that they are made of blood, as philosophers rather fail of doing. An insignificant, brainless creature like Feltre had wits, by the aid of his religion, to help or be charitable to his fellows, particularly the sinners, in the crises of life, surpassing any philosopher's.

Information of her ladyship's having inspected the apartments, to see to the minutest of his customary luxuries, cut at him all round. His valet had it from the footmen and maids; and their speaking of it meant a liking for their mistress; and that liking, added to her official solicitude on his behalf, touched a soft place in him and blew an icy wind; he was frozen where he was warmed. Here was evidence of her intending the division to be a fixed gap. She had entered this room

and looked about her. He was here to feel her presence in her absence.

Some one or something had schooled her, too. Her large-eyed directness of gaze was the same as at that inn and in Wales, but her easy sedateness was novel, her English almost the tone of the English world: he gathered it, at least, from the few remarks below stairs.

His desire to be with her was the desire to escape the phantasm of the woman haunting to subjugate him when they were separate. He could kill illusion by magnifying and clawing at her visible angles and audible false notes; and he did it until his recollections joined to the sight of her, when a clash of the thought of what she had been and the thought of what she was had the effect of conjuring a bitter sweet image that was a more seductive illusion. Strange to think, this woman once loved the man who was not half the value of the man she no longer loved. He took a shot at cynicism, but hit no mark. This woman protected her whole sex.

They sat at the dinner-table alone, thanks to a handsome wench's attractions for a philosopher. Married, and parents of a lusty son, this was their first sitting at table together. The mouth that said 'I guard my rooms' was not obtruded; she talked passingly of her brother, much of Lady Arpington and of old Mr. Woodseer; and, though she reserved a smile, there was no look of a lock on her face. She seemed pleased to be treated very courteously; she returned the stately politeness in exactest measure; very simply, as well. Her face had now an air of homeliness, well suited to an English household interior. She could chat. Any

pauses occurring, he was the one guilty of them; she did not allow them to be barrier chasms, or 'strids' for the leap with effort; she crossed them like the mountain maid over a gorge's plank—kept her tones perfectly. Her Madge and Mr. Gower Woodseer made a conversible topic. She was inquisitive for accounts of Spanish history and the land of Spain.

They passed into the drawing-room. She had heard of the fate of the poor child in Wales, she said, without a comment.

'I see now, I ought to have backed your proposal,' he confessed, and was near on shivering. She kept silent, proudly or regretfully.

Open on her workbasket was a Spanish guide-book and a map attached to it. She listened to descriptions of Cadiz, Malaga, Seville, Granada. Her curiosity was chiefly for detailed accounts of Catalonia and the Pyrenees.

'Hardly the place for you; there's a perpetual heaving of Carlism in those mountains; your own are quieter for travellers,' he remarked; and for a moment her lips moved to some likeness of a smile; a dimple in a flowing thought.

He marked the come and go of it.

He regretted his inability to add to her knowledge of the Spanish Pyrenees.

Books helped her at present, she said.

Feeling acutely that hostility would have brought them closer than her uninviting civility, he spoke of the assault on Mr. Wythan, and Gower Woodseer's conjecture, and of his having long since discharged the rascal Ines.

To which her unreproachful answer, 'You made use

of those men, my lord,' sent a cry ringing through him, recalling Feltre's words, as to the grip men progressively are held in by their deeds done.

'Oh, quite true, we change our views and ways of life,' he said, thinking she might set her considerations on other points of his character. But this reflection was a piece of humility not yet in his particular estimates of his character, and he spurned it: an act of pride that drove his mind, for occupation, to contemplate hers; which speedily became an embrace of her character, until he was asking whether the woman he called wife and dared not clasp was one of those rarest, who can be idealized by virtue of their being known. For the young man embracing a character loses grasp of his own, is plucked out of himself and passes into it, to see the creature he is with the other's eyes, and feel for the other as a very self. Such is the privilege and the chastisement of the young.

Gower Woodseer's engagement with the girl Madge was a happier subject for expatiation and agreement. Her deeper tones threw a light on Gower, and where she saw goodness he could at least behold the natural philosopher practically philosophizing.

'The girl shall have a dowry from me,' he said; and the sum named was large. Her head bent acknowledgingly; money had small weight with her now. His perception of it stripped him and lamed him.

He wished her ladyship good night. She stood up and performed a semi-ceremonious obesiance, neatly adapted to their mutual position. She had a well-bred mother.

Probably she would sleep. No such expectation could soothe the friend, and some might be thinking

misleader, of Ambrose Mallard, before he had ocular proof that the body lay underground. His promise was given to follow it to the grave, a grave in consecrated earth. Ambrose died of the accidental shot of a pocket-pistol he customarily carried loaded. Two intimate associates of the dead man swore to that habit of his. They lied to get him undisputed Christian burial. Aha! The earl laughed outright at Chummy Potts's nursery qualms. The old fellow had to do it, and he lied like a man for the sake of Ambrose Mallard's family. So much is owing to our friend.

Can ecclesiastical casuists decide upon cases of conscience affecting men of the world?

A council sat upon the case the whole night long. A committee of the worldly held argumentation in a lower chamber.

These are nights that weaken us to below the level of women. A shuttle worked in Fleetwood's head. He defended the men of the world. Lord Feltre oiled them, damned them, kindled them to a terrific expiatory blaze, and extinguishingly salved and wafted aloft the released essence of them. Maniacal for argument, Fleetwood rejected the forgiveness of sins, if sins they be. Prove them sins, and the suffering is of necessity everlasting, his insomnia logic insisted. Whichever side he took, his wife was against him; not in speech, but in her look. She was a dumb figure among the wranglers, clouded up to the neck. Her look said she knew more of him than they knew.

He departed next day for London, after kissing his child; and he would have done wisely to abstain from his exhibition of the paternal. Knowing it a step to conciliation, he checked his impulsive warmth, under

the apprehension that the mother would take it for a piece of acting to propitiate—and his lips pecked the baby's cheek. Its mother held arms for it immediately. Not without reason did his heart denounce her as a mere mother, with little of a mind to see.

The recent series of feverishly sleepless nights disposed him to snappish irritability or the thirst for tenderness. Gower had singular experiences of him on the drive Northwestward. He scarcely spoke; he said once: 'If you mean to marry, you 'll be wanting to marry soon, of course,' and his curt nod before the reply was formulated appeared to signify, the sooner the better, and deliverance for both of us. Honest though he might be, sometimes deep and sometimes picturesque, the philosopher's day had come to an end. How can Philosophy minister to raw wounds, when we are in a raging gale of the vexations, battered to right and left! Religion has a nourishing breast: Philosophy is breastless. Religion condones offences: Philosophy has no forgiveness, is an untenanted confessional:—'wide air to a cry in anguish,' Feltre says.

All the way to London Fleetwood endured his companion, letting him talk when he would.

He spent the greater part of the night discussing human affairs and spiritual with Lord Feltre, whose dialectical exhortations and insinuations were of the feeblest, but to an isolated young man, yearning for the tenderness of a woman thinking but of her grievances, the ointment brought comfort.

It soothed him during his march to and away from Ambrose Mallard's grave; where it seemed to him curious and even pitiable that Chumley Potts should be so inconsolably shaken. Well, and if the priests

have the secret of strengthening the backbone for a bend of the knee in calamity, why not go to the priests, Chummy? Potts' hearing was not addressed; nor was the chief person in the meditation affected by a question that merely jumped out of his perturbed interior.

Business at Calesford kept Fleetwood hanging about London several days further; and his hatred of a place he wasted time and money to decorate grew immeasurable. It distorted the features of the beautiful woman for whose pleasure the grand entertainments to be held there had, somewhere or other—when felon spectres were abroad over earth—been conceived.

He could then return to Esslemont. Gower was told kindly, with intentional coldness, that he could take a seat in the phaeton if he liked; and he liked, and took it. Anything to get to that girl of his!

Whatever the earl's inferiors did, their inferior station was not suffered to discolour it for his judgement. But an increasing antagonism to Woodseer's philosophy—which the fellow carried through with perpetual scorings of satisfaction—caused him to set a hard eye on the damsel under the grisly spotting shadow of the sottish bruiser, of whom, after once touching the beast, he could not rub his hands clean; and he chose to consider the winning of the prize-fighter's lass the final triumph or flag on the apex of the now despised philosophy. Vain to ask how he had come to be mixed up with the lot, or why the stolidly conceited, pretentious fellow had seat here, as by right, beside him! We sow and we reap; '*plant for sugar and taste the cane*,' some one says—this Woodseer, probably; he can, when it suits him, tickle the ears of the worldlings. And there is

worthier stuff to remember; stuff to nourish: Feltre's 'wisdom of our fathers,' rightly named Religion.

More in the country, when he traversed sweep and rise of open land, Carinthia's image began to shine, and she threw some of her light on Madge, who made Woodseer appear tolerable, sagacious, absurdly enviable, as when we have the fit to wish we were some four-foot. The fellow's philosophy wore a look of practical craft. He was going to the girl he liked, and she was, one could swear, an honest girl; and she was a comely girl, a girl to stick to a man. Her throwing over a sot was creditable. Her mistress loved her. That said much for any mortal creature. Man or woman loved by Carinthia could not be cowardly, could not be vile, must have high qualities. Next to Religion, she stood for a test of us. Had she any strong sense of Religion, in addition to the formal trooping to one of their pallid Protestant churches? Lord Feltre might prove useful to her. For merely the comprehension of the signification of Religion steadies us. It had done that for him, the earl owned.

He broke a prolonged silence by remarking to Gower: 'You haven't much to say to-day'; and the answer was: 'Very little. When I'm walking, I'm picking up; and when I'm driving I'm putting together.'

Gower was rallied on the pursuit of the personal object in both cases. He pointed at sheep, shepherd, farmer, over the hedge, all similarly occupied; and admitted shamelessly, that he had not a thought for company, scarce a word to fling. 'Ideas in gestation are the dullest matter you can have.'

'There I quite agree with you,' said Fleetwood.

Abrane, Chummy Potts, Brailstone, little Corby, were brighter comrades. And these were his Ixionides! Hitherto his carving of a way in the world had been sufficiently ill-considered. Was it preferable to be a loutish philosopher? Since the death of Ambrose Mallard, he felt Woodseer's title for that crew grind harshly; and he tried to provoke a repetition of it, that he might burst out in wrathful defence of his friends—to be named friends when they were vilified: defence of poor Ambrose at least, the sinner who, or one as bad, might have reached to pardon through the priesthood. Gower offered him no chance.

Entering Esslemont air, Fleetwood tossed his black mood to the winds. She breathed it. She was a mountain girl, and found it hard to forgive our lowlands. She would learn tolerance, taking her flights at seasons. The yacht, if she is anything of a sailor, may give her a taste of England's pleasures. She will have a special allowance for distribution among old Mr. Woodseer's people. As to the rest of the Countess of Fleetwood's wishes, her family ranks with her husband's in claims of any kind on him. There would be—she would require and had a right to demand—say, a warm half-hour of explanations: he knew the tone for them, and so little did he revolve it apprehensively, that his mind sprang beyond, to the hearing from her mouth of her not intending further to 'guard her rooms.' How quietly the words were spoken! There was a charm in the retrospect of her mouth and manner. One of the rare women who never pout or attitudinize, she could fling her glove gracefully—one might add, capturingly: under every aspect, she was a handsome belligerent. The words he had to combat pleased his memory. Some

good friend, Lady Arpington probably, had instructed her in the art of dressing to match her colour.

Concerning himself, he made no stipulation, but he reflected on Lord Feltre's likely estimate of her as a bit of a heathen. And it might be to her advantage, were she and Feltre to have some conversations. Whatever the faith, a faith should exist, for without the sentiment of religion, a woman, he says, is where she was when she left the gates of Eden. A man is not much farther. Feltre might have saved Ambrose Mallard. He is, however, right in saying, that the woman with the sentiment of religion in her bosom is a box of holy incense distinguishing her from all other women. Empty of it, she is devil's bait. At best, she is a creature who cannot overlook an injury, or must be exacting God knows what humiliations before she signs the treaty.

Informed at the house that her ladyship had been staying up on Croridge for the last two days, Fleetwood sent his hardest shot of the eyes at Gower. Let her be absent: it was equal to the first move of war, and absolved him from contemplated proposals to make amends. But the enforced solitary companionship with this ruminator of a fellow set him asking whether the godless dog he had picked up by the wayside was not incarnate another of the sins he had to expiate. Day after day, almost hourly, some new stroke fell on him. Why? Was he selected for persecution because he was wealthy? The Fates were driving him in one direction, no doubt of that.

This further black mood evaporated, and like a cessation of English storm-weather bequeathed him gloom. Ashamed of the mood, he was nevertheless directed by its final shadows to see the ruminating tramp in Gower,

and in Madge the prize-fighter's jilt: and round about Esslemont a world eyeing an Earl of Fleetwood, who painted himself the man he was, or was held to be, by getting together such a collection, from the daughter of the Old Buccaneer to the ghastly corpse of Ambrose Mallard. Why, clearly, wealth was the sole origin and agent of the mischief. With somewhat less of it, he might have walked in his place among the nation's elect, the 'herd of the gilt horns,' untroubled by ambitions and ideas.

Arriving thus far, he chanced to behold Gower and Madge walking over the grounds near the western plantation, and he regretted the disappearance of them, with the fellow talking hard into the girl's ear. Those two could think he had been of some use. The man pretending to philosophical depth was at any rate honest; one could swear to the honesty of the girl, though she had been a reckless hussy. Their humble little hopes and means to come to union approached, after a fashion, hymning at his ears. Those two were pleasanter to look on than amorous lords and great ladies, who are interesting only when they are wicked.

Four days of desolate wanderings over the estate were occupied chiefly in his decreeing the fall of timber that obstructed views, and was the more imperatively doomed for his bailiff's intercession. 'Sound wood' the trees might be: they had to assist in defraying the expense of separate establishments. A messenger to Queeney from Croridge then announced the Countess's return 'for a couple of hours.' Queeney said it was the day when her ladyship examined the weekly bills of the household. That was in the early morning. The post brought my lord a letter from Countess Livia, a

most infrequent writer. She had his word to pay her debts; what next was she for asking? He shrugged, opened the letter, and stared at the half dozen lines. The signification of them rapped on his consciousness of another heavy blow before he was perfectly intelligent.

All possible anticipation seemed here outdone: insomuch that he held palpable evidence of the Fates at work to harass and drive him. She was married to the young Earl of Cressett!

Fleetwood printed the lines on his eyeballs. They were the politely flowing feminine of a statement of the fact, which might have been in one line. They flourished wantonly: they were deadly blunt. And of all men, this youngster, who struck at him through her lips with the reproach, that he had sped the good-looking little beast upon his road to ruin:—perhaps to Ambrose Mallard's end!

## CHAPTER XLII

### THE RETARDED COURTSHIP

Carinthia reached Esslemont near noon. She came on foot, and had come unaccompanied, stick in hand, her dress looped for the roads. Madge bustled her shorter steps up the park beside her; Fleetwood met her on the terrace.

'No one can be spared at Croridge,' she said. 'I go back before dark.' Apology was not thought of; she seemed wound to the pitch.

He bowed; he led into the morning-room. 'The boy is at Croridge?'

'With me. He has his nurse. Madge was at home here more than there.'

'Why do you go back?'

'I am of use to my brother.'

'Forgive me—in what way?'

'He has enemies about him. They are the workmen of Lord Levellier. They attacked Lekkatts the other night, and my uncle fired at them out of a window and wounded a man. They have sworn they will be revenged. Mr. Wythan is with my brother to protect him.'

'Two men, very well; they don't want, if there's danger, a woman's aid in protecting him?'

She smiled, and her smile was like the hint of the steel blade an inch out of sheath.

'My brother does not count me a weak woman.'

'Oh no! No one would think that,' Fleetwood said hurriedly and heartily. 'Least of all men, I, Carinthia. But you might be rash.'

'My brother knows me cautious.'

'Chillon?'

'It is my brother's name.'

'You used to call him by his name.'

'I love his name.'

'Ah, well! I may be pardoned for wishing to hear what part you play there.'

'I go the rounds with my brother.'

'Armed?'

'We carry arms.'

'Queer sight to see in England. But there are rascals in this country, too.'

She was guilty of saying, though not pointedly: 'We do not hire defenders.'

'In civilized lands . . . ' he began and stopped. 'You have Mr. Wythan?'

'Yes, we are three.'

'You call him, I think, Owain?'

'I do.'

'In your brother's hearing?'

'Yes, my lord; it would be in your hearing if you were near.'

'No harm, no doubt.'

'There is none.'

'But you will not call your brother Chillon to me.'

'You dislike the name.'

'I learn to like everything you do and say; and every person you like.'

'It is by Mr. Wythan's dead wife's request that I call him by his name. He is our friend. He is a man to trust.'

'The situation . . . ' Fleetwood hung swaying between the worldly view of it and the white light of this woman's nature flashed on his emotion into his mind. 'You shall be trusted for judging. If he is your friend, he is my friend. I have missed the sight of our boy. You heard I was at Esslemont?'

'I heard from Madge.'

'It is positive you must return to Croridge?'

'I must be with my brother, yes.'

'Your ladyship will permit me to conduct you.'

Her head assented. There was nothing to complain of, but he had not gained a step.

The rule is, that when we have yielded initiative to a woman, we are unable to recover it without uncivil bluster. So, therefore, women dealing with gentlemen are allowed unreasonable advantages. He had never

granted it in colloquy or act to any woman but this one. Consequently, he was to see, that if the gentleman in him was not put aside, the lady would continue moving on lines of the independence he had likewise yielded, or rather flung, to her. Unless, as a result, he besieged and wooed his wife, his wife would hold on a course inclining constantly farther from the union he desired. Yet how could he begin to woo her if he saw no spark of womanly tenderness? He asked himself, because the beginning of the wooing might be checked by the call on him for words of repentance only just possible to conceive. Imagine them uttered, and she has the initiative for life.

She would not have it, certainly, with a downright brute. But he was not that. In an extremity of bitterness, he fished up a drowned old thought, of all his torments being due to the impulsive half-brute he was. And between the good and the bad in him, the sole point of strength was a pride likely, as the smooth simplicity of her indifference showed him, soon to be going down prostrate beneath her feet. Wholly a brute—well? He had to say, that playing the perfect brute with any other woman he would have his mastery. The summoning of an idea of personal power to match this woman in a contest was an effort exhausting the idea.

They passed out of Esslemont gates together at that hour of the late afternoon when Southwesterly breezes, after a summer gale, drive their huge white flocks over blue fields fresh as morning, on the march to pile the crown of the sphere, and end a troubled day with grandeur. Up the lane by the park they had open land to the heights of Croridge.

'Splendid clouds,' Fleetwood remarked.

She looked up, thinking of the happy long day's walk with her brother to the Styrian Baths. Pleasure in the sight made her face shine superbly. 'A flying Switzerland, Mr. Woodseer says,' she replied. 'England is beautiful on days like these. For walking, I think the English climate very good.'

He dropped a murmur: 'It should suit so good a walker,' and burned to compliment her spirited easy stepping, and scorned himself for the sycophancy it would be before they were on the common ground of a restored understanding. But an approval of any of her acts threatened him with enthusiasm for the whole of them, her person included; and a dam in his breast had to keep back the flood.

'You quote Woodseer to me, Carinthia. I wish you knew Lord Feltre. He can tell you of every cathedral, convent, and monastery in Europe and Syria. Nature is well enough; she is, as he says, a savage. Men's works, acting under divine direction to escape from that tangle, are better worthy of study, perhaps. If one has done wrong, for example.'

'I could listen to him,' she said.

'You would not need—except, yes, one thing. Your father's book speaks of not forgiving an injury.'

'My father does. He thinks it weakness to forgive an injury. Women do, and are disgraced, they are thought slavish. My brother is much stronger than I am. He is my father alive in that.'

'It is anti-Christian, some would think.'

'Let offending people go. He would not punish them. They may go where they will be forgiven. For them our religion is a happy retreat; we are glad

they have it. My father and my brother say that injury forbids us to be friends again. My father was injured by the English Admiralty: he never forgave it; but he would have fought one of their ships and offered his blood any day, if his country called to battle.'

'You have the same feeling, you mean.'

'I am a woman. I follow my brother, whatever he decides. It is not to say he is the enemy of persons offending him; only that they have put the division.'

'They repent?'

'If they do, they do well for themselves.'

'You would see them in sackcloth and ashes?'

'I would pray to be spared seeing them.'

'You can entirely forget — well, other moments, other feelings?'

'They may heighten the injury.'

'Carinthia, I should wish to speak plainly, if I could, and tell you . . .'

'You speak quite plainly, my lord.'

'You and I cannot be strangers or enemies.'

'We cannot be, I would not be. To be friends, we should be separate.'

'You say you are a woman; you have a heart, then?—for, if not, what have you?' was added in the tone.

'My heart is my brother's,' she said.

'All your heart?'

'My heart is my brother's until one of us drops.'

'There is not another on earth beside your brother Chillon?'

'There is my child.'

The dwarf square tower of Croridge village church fronted them against the sky, seen of both.

'You remember it,' he said; and she answered: 'I was married there.'

'You have not forgotten that injury, Carinthia?'

'I am a mother.'

'By all the saints! you hit hard. Justly. Not you. Our deeds are the hard hitters. We learn when they begin to flagellate, stroke upon stroke! Suppose we hold a costly thing in the hand and dash it to the ground—no recovery of it, none! That must be what your father meant. I can't regret you are a mother. We have a son, a bond. How can I describe the man I was!' he muttered,—'possessed! sort of werewolf! You are my wife?'

'I was married to you, my lord.'

'It 's a tie of a kind.'

'It binds me.'

'Obey, you said.'

'Obey *it*. I do.'

'You consider it holy?'

'My father and my mother spoke to me of the marriage-tie. I read the service before I stood at the altar. It is holy. It is dreadful. I will be true to it.'

'To your husband?'

'To his name, to his honour.'

'To the vow to live with him?'

'My husband broke that for me.'

'Carinthia, if he bids you, begs you to renew it? God knows what you may save me from!'

'Pray to God. Do not beg of me, my lord. I have my brother and my little son. No more of husband for me! God has given me a friend, too,—a man of humble heart, my brother's friend, my dear Rebecca's husband. He can take them from me: no one but God. See the splendid sky we have.'

With those words she barred the gates on him; at the same time she bestowed the frank look of an amiable face brilliant in the lively red of her exercise, in its bent-bow curve along the forehead, out of the line of beauty, touching, as her voice was, to make an undertone of anguish swell an ecstasy. So he felt it, for his mood was now the lover's. A torture smote him, to find himself transported by that voice at his ear to the scene of the young bride in thirty-acre meadow.

'I propose to call on Captain Kirby-Levellier to-morrow, Carinthia,' he said. 'The name of his house?'

'My brother is not now any more in the English army,' she replied. 'He has hired a furnished house named Stoneridge.'

'He will receive me, I presume?'

'My brother is a courteous gentleman, my lord.'

'Here is the church, and here we have to part for to-day. Do we?'

'Good-bye to you, my lord,' she said.

He took her hand and dropped the dead thing.

'Your idea is, to return to Esslemont some day or other?'

'For the present,' was her strange answer.

She bowed, she stepped on. On she sped, leaving him at the stammered beginning of his appeal to her.

Their parting by the graveyard of the church that had united them was what the world would class as curious. To him it was a further and a well-marked stroke of the fatality pursuing him. He sauntered by the graveyard wall until her figure slipped out of sight. It went like a puffed candle, and still it haunted the corner where last seen. Her vanishing

seemed to say, that less of her belonged to him than the phantom his eyes retained behind them somewhere.

There was in his pocket a memento of Ambrose Mallard, that the family had given him at his request. He felt the lump. It had an answer for all perplexities. It had been charged and emptied since it was in his possession; and it could be charged again. The thing was a volume as big as the world to study. For the touch of a finger, one could have its entirely satisfying contents, and fly and be a raven of that night wherein poor Ambrose wanders lost, but cured of human wounds.

He leaned on the churchyard wall, having the graves to the front of eyes bent inward. They were Protestant graves, not so impressive to him as the wreathed and gilt of those under dedication to Feltre's Madonna. But whatever they were, they had ceased to nurse an injury or feel the pain for having inflicted it. Their wrinkles had gone from them, whether of anger or suffering. Ambrose Mallard lay as peaceful in consecrated ground: and Chumley Potts would be unlikely to think that the helping to lay Ambrose in his quiet last home would cost him a roasting until priestly intercession availed. So Chummy continues a Protestant; dull consciences can! But this is incomprehensible, that she, nursing her injury, should be perfectly civil. She is a woman without emotion. She is a woman full of emotion, one man knows. She ties him to her, to make him feel the lash of his remorse. He feels it because of her casting him from her—and so civilly. If this were a Catholic church, one might go in and give the stained soul free way to get a cleans-

ing. As it is, here are the graves; the dead everywhere have their sanctity, even the heathen.

Fleetwood read the name of the family of Meek on several boards at the head of the graves. Jonathan Meek died at the age of ninety-five. A female Meek had eighty-nine years in this life. Ezra Meek gave up the ghost prematurely, with a couplet, at eighty-one. A healthy spot, Croridge, or there were virtues in the Meek family, he reflected, and had a shudder that he did not trace to its cause, beyond an acknowledgment of a desire for the warm smell of incense.

## CHAPTER XLIII

### ON THE ROAD TO THE ACT OF PENANCE

His customary wrestle with the night drove Lord Fleetwood in the stillness of the hour after matins from his hated empty Esslemont up again to the village of the long-lived people, enjoying the moist earthiness of the air off the ironstone. He rode fasting, a good preparatory state for the simple pleasures, which are virtually the Great Nourisher's teats to her young. The earl was relieved of his dejection by a sudden filling of his nostrils. Fat Esslemont underneath had no such air. Except on the mornings of his walk over the Salzkammergut and Black Forest regions, he had never consciously drawn that deep breath of the satisfied rapture, charging the whole breast with thankfulness. Huntsmen would know it, if the chase were not urgent to pull them at the tail of the running beast. Once or

twice on board his yacht he might have known something like it, but the salt sea-breeze could not be disconnected from his companion Lord Feltre, and a thought of Feltre swung vapour of incense all about him. Breathing this air of the young sun's kiss of earth, his invigoration repelled the seductions of the burnt Oriental gums.

Besides, as he had told his friend, it was the sincerity of the Catholic religion, not the seductiveness, that won him to a form of homage—the bend of the head of a foreign observer at a midnight mass. Asceticism, though it may not justify error, is a truth in itself, it is the essence extracted of the scourge, flesh vanquished; and it stands apart from controversy. Those monks of the forested mountain heights, rambling for their herbs, know the blessedness to be found in mere breathing: a neighbour readiness to yield the breath inspires it the more. For when we do not dread our end, the sense of a free existence comes back to us: we have the prized gift to infancy under the piloting of manhood. But before we taste that happiness we must perform our penance; 'No living happiness can be for the unclean,' as the holy father preached to his flock of the monastery dispersing at matins.

Ay, but penance? penance? Is there not such a thing as the doing of penance out of the Church, in the manly fashion? So to regain the right to be numbered among the captains of the world's fighting men, incontestably the best of comrades, whether or no they led away on a cataract leap at the gates of life. Boldly to say we did a wrong will clear our sky for a few shattering peals.

The penitential act means, youth put behind us, and

a steady course ahead. But, for the keeping of a steady course, men made of blood in the walks of the world must be steadied. Say it plainly—mated. There is the humiliating point of our human condition. We must have beside us and close beside us the woman we have learned to respect; supposing ourselves lucky enough to have found her;—'that required other scale of the human balance,' as Woodseer calls her now he has got her, wiser than Lord Feltre in reference to men and women. We get no balance without her. That is apparently the positive law; and by reason of men's wretched enslavement, it is the dance to dissolution when we have not honourable union with women. Feltre's view of women sees the devilish or the angelical; and to most men women are knaves or ninnies. Hence do we behold rascals or imbeciles in the offspring of most men.

He embraced the respected woman's character, with the usual effect:—to see with her sight; and she beheld a speckled creature of the intermittent whims and moods and spites; the universal Patron, whose ambition to be leader of his world made him handle foul brutes—corrupt and cause their damnation, they retort, with curses, in their pangs. She was expected to pardon the husband, who had not abstained from his revenge on her for keeping him to the pledge of his word. And what a revenge!—he had flung the world at her. She is consequently to be the young bride she was on the memorable morning of the drive off these heights of Croridge down to thirty-acre meadow! It must be a saint to forgive such offences; and she is not one, she is deliciously not one, neither a Geneviève nor a Griselda. He handed her the rod to chastise him.

Her exchange of Christian names with the Welshman would not do it; she was too transparently sisterly, provincially simple; she was, in fact, respected. Any whipping from her was child's play to him, on whom, if he was to be made to suffer, the vision of the intense felicity of austerest asceticism brought the sensation as bracingly as the Boreal morning animates men of high blood in ice regions. She could but gently sting, even if vindictive.

Along the heights, outside the village, some way below a turn of the road to Lekkatts, a gentleman waved hand. The earl saluted with his whip, and waited for him.

'Nothing wrong, Mr. Wythan?'

'Nothing to fear, my lord.'

'I get a trifle uneasy.'

'The countess will not leave her brother.'

A glow of his countess's friendliness for this open-faced, prompt-speaking, good fellow of the faintly inky eyelids, and possibly sheepish inclinations, melted Fleetwood. Our downright repentance of misconduct toward a woman binds us at least to the tolerant recognition of what poor scraps of consolement she may have picked up between then and now—when we can stretch fist in flame to defy it on the oath of her being a woman of honour.

The earl alighted and said: 'Her brother, I suspect, is the key of the position.'

'He's worth it—she loves her brother,' said Mr. Wythan, betraying a feature of his quick race, with whom the reflection upon a statement is its lightning in advance.

Gratified by the instant apprehension of his meaning,

Fleetwood interpreted the Welshman's. 'I have to see the brother worthy of her love. Can you tell me the hour likely to be convenient?'

Mr. Wythan thought an appointment unnecessary: which conveyed the sufficient assurance of audience granted.

'You know her brother well, Mr. Wythan?'

'Know him as if I had known him for years. They both come to the mind as faith comes—no saying how; one swears by them.'

Fleetwood eyed the Welsh gentleman, with an idea that he might readily do the same by him.

Mr. Wythan's quarters were at the small village inn, whither he was on his way to breakfast. The earl slipped an arm through the bridle reins and walked beside him, listening to an account of the situation at Lekkatts. It was that extraordinary complication of moves and checks which presents in the main a knot, for the powers above to cut. A miserly old lord withholds arrears of wages; his workmen strike at a critical moment; his nephew, moved by common humanity, draws upon crippled resources to supply their extremer needs, though they are ruining his interests. They made one night a demonstration of the terrorizing sort round Lekkatts, to give him a chorus; and the old lord fired at them out of window and wounded a man. For that they vowed vengeance. All the new gunpowder milled in Surrey was, for some purpose of his own, stored by Lord Levellier on the alder island of the pond near his workshops, a quarter of a mile below the house. They refused, whatever their object, to let a pound of it be moved, at a time when at last the Government had undertaken to submit it to experi-

ments. And there they stood on ground too strong for 'the Captain,' as they called him, to force, because of the quantity stored at Lekkatts being largely beyond the amount under cover of Lord Levellier's licence. The old lord was very ill, and he declined to see a doctor, but obstinately kept from dying. His nephew had to guard him, and at the same time support an enemy having just cause of complaint. This, however, his narrow means would not much longer permit him to do. The alternative was then offered him of either siding arbitrarily against the men and his conscience or of taking a course 'imprudent on the part of a presumptive heir,' Mr. Wythan said hurriedly at the little inn's doorsteps.

'You make one of his lordship's guard?' said Fleetwood.

'The countess, her brother, and I, yes.'

'Danger at all?'

'Not so much to fear while the countess is with us.'

'Fear is not a word for Carinthia.'

Her name on the earl's lips drew a keen shot of the eye from Mr. Wythan, and he read the signification of the spoken name. 'You know what every Cambrian living thinks of her, my lord.'

'She shall not have one friend the less for me.'

Fleetwood's hand was out for a good-bye, and the hand was grasped by one who looked happy in doing it. He understood and trusted the man after that, warmed in thinking how politic his impulses could be.

His intention of riding up to Croridge at noon to request his interview with Mr. Kirby-Levellier was then stated.

'The key of the position, as you said,' Mr. Wythan

remarked, not proffering an opinion of it more than was expressed by a hearty, rosy countenance, that had to win its way with the earl before excuse was found for the venturesome repetition of his phrase.

Cantering back to that home of the loves of Gower Woodseer and Madge Winch, the thought of his first act of penance done, without his feeling the poorer for it, reconciled Fleetwood to the aspect of the hollow place.

He could not stay beneath the roof. His task of breakfasting done, he was off before the morning's delivery of letters, riding round the country under Croridge, soon up there again. And Henrietta might be at home, he was reminded by hearing band-music as he followed the directions to the house named Stoneridge. The band consisted of eight wind instruments; they played astonishingly well for itinerant musicians. By curious chance, they were playing a selection from the *Pirata;* presently he heard the notes to '*il mio tradito amor*.' They had hit upon Henrietta's favourite piece!

At the close of it he dismounted, flung the reins to his groom, and, addressing a compliment to the leader, was deferentially saluted with a 'my lord.' Henrietta stood at the window, a servant held the door open for him to enter; he went in, and the beautiful young woman welcomed him: 'Oh, my dear lord, you have given me such true delight! How very generous of you!' He protested ignorance. She had seen him speak to the conductor and receive the patron's homage; and who but he knew her adored of operas, or would have had the benevolent impulse to think of solacing her exile from music in the manner so sure of her taste!

She was at her loveliest: her features were one sweet bloom, as of the sunny flower garden; and, touched to the heart by the music and the kindness, she looked the look that kisses; innocently, he felt, feeling himself on the same good ground while he could own he admired the honey creature, much as an amateur may admire one of the pictures belonging to the nation.

'And you have come? . . .' she said. 'We are to believe in happy endings?'

He shrugged, as the modest man should, who says: 'If it depends on me'; but the words were firmly spoken and could be credited.

'Janey is with her brother down at Lekkatts. Things are at a deadlock. A spice of danger, enough to relieve the dulness; and where there is danger Janey's at home.' Henrietta mimicked her Janey. 'Parades with her brother at night; old military cap on her head; firearms primed; sings her Austrian mountain songs or the Light Cavalry call, till it rings all day in my ears—she has a thrilling contralto. You are not to think her wild, my lord. She's for adventure or domesticity, "whichever the Fates decree." She really is coming to the perfect tone.'

'Speak of her,' said the earl. 'She can't yet overlook? . . .'

'It's in the family. She will overlook anything her brother excuses.'

'I 'm here to see him.'

'I heard it from Mr. Wythan.'

'"Owain," I believe?'

Henrietta sketched apologies, with a sidled head, soft pout, wavy hand. 'He belongs to the order of primitive people. His wife—the same pattern, one supposes—

pledged them to their Christian names. The man is a simpleton, but a gentleman; and Janey holds his dying wife's wish sacred. We are all indebted to him.'

'Whatever she thinks right!' said Fleetwood.

The fair young woman's warm nature flew out to him on a sparkle of grateful tenderness in return for his magnanimity, oblivious of the inflamer it was: and her heart thanked him more warmly, without the perilous show of emotion, when she found herself secure.

She was beautiful, she was tempting, and probably the weakest of players in the ancient game of two; and clearly she was not disposed to the outlaw game; was only a creature of ardour. That he could see, seeing the misinterpretation a fellow like Brailstone would put upon a temporary flush of the feminine, and the advantage he would take of it, perhaps not unsuccessfully—the dog! He committed the absurdity of casting a mental imprecation at the cunning tricksters of emotional women, and yelled at himself in the worn old surplice of the converted rake. But letting his mind run this way, the *tradito amor* of the band outside the lady's window was instantly traced to Lord Brailstone; so convictingly, that he now became a very counsel for an injured husband in denunciation of the seductive compliment.

Henrietta prepared to conduct him to Lekkatts; her bonnet was brought. She drew forth a letter from a silken work-bag, and raised it,—Livia's handwriting.

'I've written my opinion,' he said.

'No too severe, pray.'

'Posted.'

'Livia wanted a protector.'

'And chose—what on earth are you saying!'

Livia and her boyish lord were abandoned on the spot, though Henrietta could have affirmed stoutly that there was much to be pleaded, if a female advocate dared it, and a man would but hear.

His fingers were at the leaves of a Spanish dictionary.

'Oh yes, and here we have a book of Travels in Spain,' she said. 'Everything Spanish for Janey now. You are aware?—no?'

He was unaware and desired to be told.

'Janey's latest idea; only she would have conceived the notion. You solve our puzzle, my lord.'

She renewed the thanks she persisted in offering for the military music now just ceasing: vexatiously, considering that it was bad policy for him to be unmasking Brailstone to her. At the same time, the blindness which rendered her unconscious of Brailstone's hand in sending members of a military band to play selections from the favourite opera they had jointly drunk of to ecstasy, was creditable; touching when one thought of the pursuer's many devices, not omitting some treason on the part of her present friend.

'Tell me—I solve?' he said.

Henrietta spied the donkey-basket bearing the two little ones.

'Yes, I hope so—on our way down,' she made answer. 'I want you to see the pair of love-birds in a nest.'

The boy and girl were seen lying side by side, both fast asleep; fair-haired girl, dark-haired boy, faced to one another.

'Temper?' said Fleetwood, when he had taken observation of them.

'Very imperious—Mr. Boy!' she replied, straightening her back under a pretty frown, to convey the humour of the infant tyrant.

The father's mind ran swiftly on a comparison of the destinies of the two children, from his estimate of their parents; many of Gower Woodseer's dicta converging to reawaken thoughts upon Nature's laws, which a knowledge of his own nature blackened. He had to persuade himself that this child of his was issue of a loving union; he had to do it violently, conjuring a vivid picture of the mother in bud, and his recognition of her young charm; the pain of keeping to his resolve to quit her, lest she should subjugate him and despoil him of his wrath; the fatalism in his coming and going; the romantic freak it had been,—a situation then so clearly wrought, now blurred past comprehension. But there must have been love, or some love on his part. Otherwise he was bound to pray for the mother to predominate in the child, all but excluding its father.

Carinthia's image, as a result, ascended sovereignly, and he hung to it.

For if we are human creatures with consciences, nothing is more certain than that we make our taskmasters of those to whom we have done a wrong, the philosopher says. Between Lord Feltre and Gower Woodseer, influenced pretty equally by each of them, this young nobleman was wakening to the claims of others—Youth's infant conscience. Fleetwood now conceived the verbal supplication for his wife's forgiveness involved in the act of penance; and verbal meant abject; with him, going so far, it would mean naked, precise, no slurring. That he knew, and a tremor went over him. Women, then, are really the half of the world in power as much

as in their number, if men pretend to a step above the savage. Or, well, his wife was a power.

He had forgotten the puzzle spoken of by Henrietta, when she used the word again and expressed her happiness in the prospect before them—caused by his presence, of course.

'You are aware, my dear lord, Janey worships her brother. He was defeated, by some dastardly contrivance, in a wager to do wonderful feats—for money! money! money! a large stake. How we come off our high horses! I hadn't an idea of money before I was married. I think of little else. My husband has notions of honour; he engaged himself to pay a legacy of debts; his uncle would not pay debts long due to him. He was reduced to the shift of wagering on his great strength and skill. He could have done it. His enemy managed—enemy there was! He had to sell out of the army in consequence. I shall never have Janey's face of suffering away from my sight. He is a soldier above all things. It seems hard on me, but I cannot blame him for snatching at an opportunity to win military distinction. He is in treaty for the post of aide to the Colonel—the General of the English contingent bound for Spain, for the cause of the Queen. My husband will undertake to be at the orders of his chief as soon as he can leave this place. Janey goes with him, according to present arrangements.'

Passing through a turnstile, that led from the road across a meadow-slope to the broken land below, Henrietta had view of the earl's hard white face, and she hastened to say: 'You have altered that, my lord. She is devoted to her brother; and her brother running dangers, . . . and danger in itself is an attraction to

her. But her husband will have the first claim. She has her good sense. She will never insist on going, if you oppose. She will be ready to fill her station. It will be her pride and her pleasure.'

Henrietta continued in the vein of these assurances; and Carinthia's character was shooting lightnings through him, withering that of the woman who referred to his wife's good sense and her station; and certainly would not have betrayed herself by such drawlings if she had been very positive that Carinthia's disposition toward wealth and luxury resembled hers. She knew the reverse; or so his contemptuously generous effort to frame an apology for the stuff he was hearing considered it. His wife was lost to him. That fact smote on his breast the moment he heard of her design to go with her brother.

Wildest of enterprises! But a criminal saw himself guilty of a large part in the disaster the two heroical souls were striving desperately to repair. If her Chillon went, Carinthia would go—sure as flame is drawn to air. The exceeding splendour in the character of a young woman, injured as she had been, soft to love, as he knew her, and giving her husband no other rival than a beloved brother, no ground of complaint save her devotion to her brother, pervaded him, without illuminating or lifting; rather with an indication of a foul contrast, that prostrated him.

Half of our funny heathen lives we are bent double to gather things we have tossed away! was one of the numbers of apposite sayings that hummed about him, for a chorus of the world's old wisdom in derision, when he descended the heathy path and had sight of Carinthia beside her Chillon. Would it be the same thing if he

had it in hand again? Did he wish it to be the same? Was not he another man? By the leap of his heart to the woman standing down there, he was a better man! But recent spiritual exercises brought him to see superstitiously how by that sign she was lost to him; for everlastingly in this life the better pays for the worse; thus is the better a proved thing.

Both Chillon and Carinthia, it is probable, might have been stirred to deeper than compassion, had the proud young nobleman taken them into his breast to the scouring of it; exposing the grounds of his former brutality, his gradual enlightenment, his ultimate acknowledgment of the pricelessness of the woman he had won to lose her. An imploring of forgiveness would not have been necessary with those two, however great their—or the woman's—astonishment at the revelation of an abysmal male humanity. A complete exposure of past meanness is the deed of present courage certain of its reward without as well as within; for then we show our fellows that the slough is cast. But life is a continuous fight; and members of the social world display its degree of civilization by fighting in armour; most of them are born in it; and their armour is more sensitive than their skins. It was Fleetwood's instinct of his inability to fling it off utterly which warned him of his loss of the wife, whose enthusiasm to wait on her brother in danger might have subsided into the channel of duty, even tenderness, had he been able resolutely to strip himself bare. This was the further impossible to him, because of a belief he now imposed upon himself, to cover the cowardly shrinking from so extreme a penitential act, that such confessions are due from men to the priest only, and

that he could confess wholly and absolutely to the priest—to heaven, therefore, under seal, and in safety, but with perfect repentance.

So, compelled to keep his inner self unknown, he fronted Chillon; courteously, in the somewhat lofty seeming of a guarded manner, he requested audience for a few minutes; observing the princely figure of the once hated man, and understanding Henrietta's sheer womanly choice of him; Carinthia's idolatry, too, as soon as he had spoken. The man was in his voice.

Chillon said: 'It concerns my sister, I have to think. In that case, her wish is to be present. Your lordship will shorten the number of minutes for the interview by permitting it.'

Fleetwood encountered Carinthia's eyes. They did not entreat or defy. They seconded her brother, and were a civil shining naught on her husband. He bowed his head, constrained, feeling heavily the two to one.

She replied to the look: 'My brother and I have a single mind. We save time by speaking three together, my lord.'

He was led into the long room of the workshop, where various patterns of muskets, rifles, pistols, and swords were stars, crosses, wedges, over the walls, and a varnished wooden model of a piece of cannon occupied the middle place, on a block.

Contempt of military weapons and ridicule of the art of war were common in those days among a people beginning to sit with habitual snugness at the festive board provided for them by the valour of their fathers. Fleetwood had not been on the side of the banqueting citizens, though his country's journals and her feasted popular wits made a powerful current to whelm opposi-

tion. But the appearance of the woman, his wife, here, her head surrounded by destructive engines in the form of trophy, and the knowledge that this woman bearing his name designed to be out at the heels of a foreign army or tag-rag of uniformed rascals, inspired him to reprobate men's bad old game as heartily as good sense does in the abstract, and as derisively as it is the way with comfortable islanders before the midnight trumpet-notes of panic have tumbled them to their legs. He took his chair, sickened.

He was the next moment taking Carinthia's impression of Chillon, compelled to it by an admiration that men and women have alike for shapes of strength in the mould of grace, over whose firm build a flicker of agility seems to run. For the young soldier's figure was visibly in its repose prompt to action as the mind's movement. This was her brother; her enthusiasm for her brother was explained to him. No sooner did he have the conception of it than it plucked at him painfully; and, feeling himself physically eclipsed by the object of Carinthia's enthusiasm, his pride of the rival counselled him to preserve the mask on what was going on within, lest it should be seen that he was also morally beaten at the outset. A trained observation told him, moreover, that her Chillon's correctly handsome features, despite their conventional urbanity, could knit to smite, and held less of the reserves of mercy behind them than Carinthia's glorious barbaric ruggedness. Her eyes, each time she looked at her brother, had, without doting, the light as of the rise of happy tears to the underlids: as they had on a certain day at the altar, when 'my lord' was 'my husband,'—more shyly then. He would have said, as beautifully, but for envy of the

frank, pellucid worship in that look on her proved hero. It was the jewel of all the earth to win back to himself; and it subjected him, through his desire for it, to a measurement with her idol, in character, quality, strength, hardness. He heard the couple pronouncing sentence of his loss by anticipation.

Why had she primed her brother to propose the council of three? Addressing them separately, he could have been his better or truer self. The sensation of the check imposed on him was instructive as to her craft and the direction of her wishes. She preferred the braving of hazards and horrors beside her brother, in scorn of the advantages he could offer; and he yearned to her for despising by comparison the bribe he proposed in the hope that he might win her to him. She was with religion to let him know the meanness of wealth.

Thus, at the edge of the debate, or contest, the young lord's essential nobility disarmed him; and the revealing of it, which would have appealed to Carinthia and Chillon both, was forbidden by its constituent pride, which helped him to live and stood obstructing explanatory speech.

## CHAPTER XLIV

### BETWEEN THE EARL, THE COUNTESS AND HER BROTHER, AND OF A SILVER CROSS

Carinthia was pleased by hearing Lord Fleetwood say to her: 'Your Madge and my Gower are waiting to have the day named for them.'

She said: 'I respect him so much for his choice of Madge. They shall not wait, if I am to decide.'

'Old Mr. Woodseer has undertaken to join them.'

'It is in Whitechapel they will be married.'

The blow that struck was not intended, and Fleetwood passed it, under her brother's judicial eye. Any small chance word may carry a sting for the neophyte in penitence.

'My lawyers will send down the settlement on her, to be read to them to-day or to-morrow. With the interest on that and the sum he tells me he has in the Funds, they keep the wolf from the door—a cottage door. They have their cottage. There's an old song of love in a cottage. His liking for it makes him seem wiser than his clever sayings. He'll work in that cottage.'

'They have a good friend to them in you, my lord. It will not be poverty for their simple wants. I hear of the little cottage in Surrey where they are to lodge at first, before they take one of their own.'

'We will visit them.'

'When I am in England I shall visit them often.'

He submitted.

'The man up here wounded is recovering?'

'Yes, my lord. I am learning to nurse the wounded, with the surgeon to direct me.'

'Matters are sobering down?—The workmen?'

'They listen to reason so willingly when we speak personally, we find.'

The earl addressed Chillon. 'Your project of a Spanish expedition reminds me of favourable reports of your chief.'

'Thoroughly able and up to the work,' Chillon answered.

'Queer people to meddle with.'

'We're on the right side in the dispute.'

'It counts, Napoleon says. A Spanish civil war promises bloody doings.'

'Any war does that.'

'In the Peninsula it's war to the knife, a merciless business.'

'Good schooling for the profession.'

Fleetwood glanced: she was collected and attentive. 'I hear from Mrs. Levellier that Carinthia would like to be your companion.'

'My sister has the making of a serviceable hospital nurse.'

'You hear the chatter of London!'

'I have heard it.'

'You encourage her, Mr. Levellier?'

'She will be useful—better there than here, my lord.'

'I claim a part in the consultation.'

'There's no consultation; she determines to go.'

'We can advise her of all the risks.'

'She has weighed them, every one.'

'In the event of accidents, the responsibility for having persuaded her would rest on you.'

'My brother has not persuaded me,' Carinthia's bell tones intervened. 'I proposed it. The persuasion was mine. It is my happiness to be near him, helping, if I can.'

'Lady Fleetwood, I am entitled to think that your brother yielded to a request urged in ignorance of the nature of the risks a woman runs.'

'My brother does not yield to a request without examining it all round, my lord, and I do not. I know the risks. An evil that we should not endure, —life may go. There can be no fear for me.'

She spoke plain truth. The soul of this woman came out in its radiance to subdue him, as her visage sometimes did; and her voice enlarged her words. She was a warrior woman, Life her sword, Death her target, never to be put to shame, unconquerable. No such symbolical image smote him, but he had an impression, the prose of it. As in the scene of the miners' cottages, her lord could have knelt to her; and for an unprotesting longer space now. He choked a sigh, shrugged, and said, in the world's patient manner with mad people: 'You have set your mind on it; you see it rose-coloured. You would not fear, no, but your friends would have good reason to fear. It 's a menagerie in revolt over there. It is not really the place for you. Abandon the thought, I beg.'

'I shall, if my brother does not go,' said Carinthia.

Laughter of spite at a remark either silly or slyly defiant was checked in Fleetwood by the horror of the feeling that she had gone, was ankle-deep in bloody mire, captive, prey of a rabble soldiery, meditating the shot or stab of the blessed end out of woman's half of our human muddle.

He said to Chillon: 'Pardon me, war is a detestable game. Women in the thick of it add a touch to the brutal hideousness of the whole thing.'

Chillon said: 'We are all of that opinion. Men have to play the game; women serving in hospital make it humaner.'

'Their hospitals are not safe.'

'Well! Safety!'

For safety is nowhere to be had. But the earl pleaded: 'At least in our country.'

'In our country women are safe?'

'They are, we may say, protected.'

'Laws and constables are poor protection for them.'

'The women we name ladies are pretty safe, as a rule.'

'My sister, then, was the exception.'

After a burning half minute the earl said: 'I have to hear it from you, Mr. Levellier. You see me here.'

That was handsomely spoken. But Lord Fleetwood had been judged and put aside. His opening of an old case to hint at repentance for brutality annoyed the man who had let him go scathless for a sister's sake.

'The grounds of your coming, my lord, are not seen; my time is short.'

'I must, I repeat, be consulted with regard to Lady Fleetwood's movements.'

'My sister does not acknowledge your claim.'

'The Countess of Fleetwood's acts involve her husband.'

'One has to listen at times to what old sailors call Caribbee!' Chillon exclaimed impatiently, half aloud. 'My sister received your title; she has to support it. She did not receive the treatment of a wife:—or lady, or woman, or domestic animal. The bond is broken, as far as it bears on her subjection. She holds to the rite, thinks it sacred. You can be at rest as to her behaviour. In other respects, your lordship does not exist for her.'

'The father of her child must exist for her.'

'You raise that curtain, my lord!'

In the presence of three it would not bear a shaking.

Carinthia said, in pity of his torture:—

'I have my freedom, and am thankful for it, to follow my brother, to share his dangers with him. That is more to me than luxury and the married state. I take only my freedom.'

'Our boy? You take the boy?'

'My child is with my sister Henrietta.'

'Where?'

'We none know yet.'

'You still mistrust me?'

Her eyes were on a man that she had put from her peaceably; and she replied, with sweetness in his ears, with shocks to a sinking heart, 'My lord, you may learn to be a gentle father to the child. I pray you may. My brother and I will go. If it is death for us, I pray my child may have his father, and God directing his father.'

Her speech had the clang of the final.

'Yes, I hope—if it be the worst happening, I pray, too,' said he, and drooped and brightened desperately: 'But you, too, Carinthia, you could aid by staying, by being with the boy and me. Carinthia!' he clasped her name, the vapour left to him of her: 'I have learnt—learnt what I am, what you are; I have to climb a height to win back the wife I threw away. She was unknown to me; I to myself nearly as much. I sent a warning of the kind of husband for you—a poor kind; I just knew myself well enough for that. You claimed my word—the blessing of my life, if I had known it! We were married; I played—I see the beast I played. Money is power, they say. I see the means it is to damn the soul, unless we—unless a man does what I do now.'

Fleetwood stopped. He had never spoken such words—arterial words, as they were, though the commonest; and with moist brows, dry lips, he could have resumed, have said more, have taken this woman, this dream of the former bride, the present stranger, into his chamber of the brave aims and sentenced deeds. Her brother in the room was the barrier; and she sat mute, large-eyed, expressionless. He had plunged low in the man's hearing; the air of his lungs was thick, hard to breathe, for shame of a degradation so extreme.

Chillon imagined him to be sighing. He had to listen further. 'Soul' had been an uttered word. When the dishonouring and mishandling brute of a young nobleman stuttered a compliment to Carinthia on her 'faith in God's assistance and the efficacy of prayer,' he jumped to his legs, not to be shouting 'Hound!' at him. He said, under control: 'God's name shall be left to the Church. My sister need not be further troubled. She has shown she is not persuaded by me. Matters arranged here quickly,—we start. If I am asked whether I think she does wisely to run the risks in an insurrectionary country rather than remain at home exposed to the honours and amusements your lordship offers, I think so; she is acting in her best interests. She has the choice of being abroad with me or staying here unguarded by me. She has had her experience. She chooses rightly. Paint the risks she runs, you lay the colours on those she escapes. She thanks the treatment she has undergone for her freedom to choose. I am responsible for nothing but the not having stood against her most wretched marriage. It might have been foreseen. Out there in

the war she is protected. Here she is with—I spare your lordship the name.'

Fleetwood would have heard harsher had he not been Carinthia's husband. He withheld his reply. The language moved him to proud hostility: but the speaker was Carinthia's brother.

He said to her: 'You won't forget Gower and Madge?'

She gave him a smile in saying: 'It shall be settled for a day after next week.'

The forms of courtesy were exchanged.

At the closing of the door on him, Chillon said: 'He did send a message: I gathered it—without the words—from our Uncle Griphard. I thought him in honour bound to you—and it suited me that I should.'

'I was a blindfold girl, dearest; no warning would have given me sight,' said Carinthia. 'That was my treachery to the love of my brother. I dream of father and mother reproaching me.'

The misery of her time in England had darkened her mind's picture of the early hour with Chillon on the heights above the forsaken old home; and the enthusiasm of her renewed devotion to her brother giving it again, as no light of a lost Eden, as the brilliant step she was taking with him from their morning Eastern Alps to smoky-crimson Pyrenees and Spanish sierras; she could imagine the cavernous interval her punishment for having abandoned a sister's duties in the quest of personal happiness.

But simultaneously, the growing force of her mind's intelligence, wherein was no enthusiasm to misdirect by overcolouring, enabled her to gather more than a suspicion of comparative feebleness in the man stripped

of his terrors. She penetrated the discrowned tyrant's nature some distance, deep enough to be quit of her foregoing alarms. These, combined with his assured high style, had woven him the magical coat, threadbare to quiet scrutiny. She matched him beside her brother. The dwarfed object was then observed; and it was not for a woman to measure herself beside him. She came, however, of a powerful blood, and he was pressing her back on her resources: without the measurement or a thought of it, she did that which is the most ordinary and the least noticed of our daily acts in civilized intercourse, she subjected him to the trial of the elements composing him, by collision with what she felt of her own; and it was because she felt them strongly, aware of her feeling them, but unaware of any conflict, that the wrestle occurred. She flung him, pitied him, and passed on along her path elsewhere. This can be done when love is gone. It is done more or less at any meeting of men and men; and men and women who love not are perpetually doing it, unconsciously or sensibly. Even in their love, a time for the trial arrives among certain of them; and the leadership is assumed, and submission ensues, tacitly, nothing of the contention being spoken, perhaps nothing definitely known.

In Carinthia's case, her revived enthusiasm for her brother drove to the penetration of the husband pleading to thwart its course. His offer was wealth: that is, luxury, amusement, ease. The sub-audible 'himself' into the bargain was disregarded, not counting with one who was an upward rush of fire at the thought that she was called to share her brother's dangers.

Chillon cordially believed the earl to be the pestilent

half madman, junction with whom is a constant trepidation for the wife, when it is not a screaming plight. He said so, and Carinthia let him retain his opinion. She would have said it herself to support her scheme, though 'mad' applied to a man moving in the world with other men was not understood by her.

With Henrietta for the earl's advocate, she was patient as the deaf rock-wall enthusiasm can be against entreaties to change its direction or bid it disperse. The 'private band of picked musicians' at the disposal of the Countess of Fleetwood, and Opera singers (Henrietta mentioned resonant names) hired for wonderful nights at Esslemont and Calesford or on board the earl's beautiful schooner yacht, were no temptation. Nor did Henrietta's allusions to his broken appearance move his wife, except in her saying regretfully: 'He changes.'

On the hall table at Esslemont, a letter from his bankers informed the earl of a considerable sum of money paid in to his account in the name of Lord Brailstone. Chumley Potts, hanging at him like a dog without a master since the death of his friend Ambrose, had journeyed down: 'Anxious about you,' he said. Anxious about or attracted by the possessor of Ambrose Mallard's 'clean sweeper,' the silver-mounted small pistol; sight of which he begged to have; and he lengthened his jaw on hearing it was loaded. A loaded pistol, this dark little one to the right of the earl's blotting-pad and pens, had the look of a fearful link with his fallen chaps and fishy hue. Potts maundered moralities upon 'life,' holding the thing in his hand, weighing it, eyeing the muzzle. He 'couldn't help thinking of what is going to happen to us *after* it all':

and 'Brosey knows now!' was followed by a twitch of one cheek and the ejaculation: 'Forever!' Fleetwood alive and Ambrose dead were plucking the startled worldling to a peep over the verge into our abyss; and the young lord's evident doing of the same commanded Chumley Potts' imitation of him under the cloud Ambrose had become for both of them.

He was recommended to see Lord Feltre, if he had a desire to be instructed on the subject of the mitigation of our pains in the regions below. Potts affirmed that he meant to die a Protestant Christian. Thereupon, carrying a leaden burden of unlaughed laughable stuff in his breast, and Chummy's concluding remark to speed him: 'Damn it, no, we'll stick to our religion!' Fleetwood strode off to his library, and with the names of the Ixionides of his acquaintance ringing round his head, proceeded to strike one of them off the number privileged at the moment to intrude on him. Others would follow; this one must be the first to go. He wrote the famous letter to Lord Brailstone, which debarred the wily pursuer from any pretext to be running down into Mrs. Levellier's neighbourhood, and also precluded the chance of his meeting the fair lady at Calesford. With the brevity equivalent to the flick of a glove on the cheek, Lord Brailstone was given to understand by Lord Fleetwood that relations were at an end between them. No explanation was added; a single sentence executed the work, and in the third person. He did not once reflect on the outcry in the ear of London coming from the receiver of such a letter upon payment of a debt.

The letter posted and flying, Lord Fleetwood was kinder to Chumley Potts; he had a friendly word for

Gower Woodseer; though both were heathens, after their diverse fashions, neither of them likely ever to set out upon the grand old road of Rome: Lord Feltre's 'Appian Way of the Saints and Comforters.'

Chummy was pardoned when they separated at night for his reiterated allusions to the temptation of poor Ambrose Mallard's conclusive little weapon lying on the library table within reach of a man's armchair: in its case, and the case locked, yes, but easily opened, 'provoking every damnable sort of mortal curiosity!' The soundest men among us have their fits of the blues, Fleetwood was told. 'Not wholesome!' Chummy shook his head resolutely, and made himself comprehensibly mysterious. He meant well. He begged his old friend to promise he would unload and keep it unloaded. 'For I know the infernal worry you have—deuced deal worse than a night's bad luck!' said he; and Fleetwood smiled sourly at the world's total ignorance of causes. His wretchedness was due now to the fact that the aforetime huntress refused to be captured. He took a silver cross from a table-drawer and laid it on the pistol-case. 'There, Chummy,' he said; that was all; not sermonizing or proselytizing. He was partly comprehended by Chumley Potts, fully a week later. The unsuspecting fellow, soon to be dispatched in the suite of Brailstone, bore away an unwontedly affectionate dismissal to his bed, and spoke some rather squeamish words himself, as he recollected with disgust when he ran about over London repeating his executioner's.

The Cross on the pistol-case may have conduced to Lord Fleetwood's thought, that his days among unrepentant ephemeral Protestant sinners must have their

immediate termination. These old friends were the plague-infected clothes he flung off his body. But the Cross where it lay, forbidding a movement of the hand to that box, was authoritative to decree his passage through a present torture, by the agency of the hand he held back from the solution of his perplexity, at the cost which his belief in the Eternal would pay. Henrietta had mentioned her husband's defeat, by some dastardly contrivance. He had to communicate, for the disburdening of his soul, not only that he was guilty, but the meanest of criminals, in being no more than half guilty. His training told him of the contempt women entertain toward the midway or cripple sinner, when they have no special desire to think him innocent. How write, or even how phrase his having merely breathed in his ruffian's hearing the wish that he might hear of her husband's defeat! And with what object? Here, too, a woman might, years hence, if not forgive, bend her head resignedly over the man's vile nature, supposing strong passion his motive. But the name for the actual motive? It would not bear writing, or any phrasing round it. An unsceptred despot bidden take a fair woman's eyes into his breast, saw and shrank. And now the eyes were Carinthia's: he saw a savage bridegroom, and a black ladder-climber, and the sweetest of pardoning brides, and the devil in him still insatiate for revenge upon her who held him to his word.

He wrote, read, tore the page, trimmed the lamp, and wrote again. He remembered Gower Woodseer's having warned him he would finish his career a monk. Not, like Feltre, an oily convert, but under the hood, yes, and extracting a chartreuse from his ramble through

woods richer far than the philosopher's milk of Mother Nature's bosom. There flamed the burning signal of release from his torments; there his absolving refuge, instead of his writing fruitless, intricate, impossible stuff to a woman. The letter was renounced and shredded: the dedicated ascetic contemplated a hooded shape, washed of every earthly fleck. It proved how men may by power of grip squeeze raptures out of pain.

## CHAPTER XLV

### CONTAINS A RECORD OF WHAT WAS FEARED, WHAT WAS HOPED, AND WHAT HAPPENED

The Dame is at her thumps for attention to be called to 'the strangeness of it,' that a poor, small, sparse village, hardly above a hamlet, on the most unproductive of Kentish heights, part of old forest land, should at this period become 'the cynosure of a city beautifully named by the poet Great Augusta, and truly indeed the world's metropolis.'

Put aside her artful pother to rouse excitement at stages of a narrative, London's general eye upon little Croridge was but another instance of the extraordinary and not so wonderful. Lady Arpington, equal to a Parliament in herself, spoke of the place and the countess courted by her repentant lord. Brailstone and Chumley Potts were town criers of the executioner letter each had received from the earl; Potts with his chatter of a suicide's pistol kept loaded in a case under a two-inch-long silver Cross, and with sundry dramatic

taps on the forehead, dottings over the breast, an awful grimace of devoutness. There was no mistaking him. The young nobleman of the millions was watched; the town spy-glass had him in its orbit. Tales of the ancestral Fleetwoods ran beside rumours of a Papist priest at the bedside of the Foredoomed to Error's dying mother. His wealth was counted, multiplied by the ready naughts of those who know little and dread much. Sir Meeson Corby referred to an argument Lord Fleetwood had held on an occasion hotly against the logical consistency of the Protestant faith; and to his alarm lest some day 'all that immense amount of money should slip away from us to favour the machinations of Roman Catholicism!' The Countess of Cressett, Livia, anticipated her no surprise at anything Lord Fleetwood might do: she knew him.

So thereupon, with the whirr of a covey on wing before the fowler, our crested three of immemorial antiquity and a presumptive immortality, the Ladies Endor, Eldritch, and Cowry, shot up again, hooting across the dormant chief city Old England's fell word of the scarlet shimmer above the nether pit-flames, Rome. An ancient horror in the blood of the population, conceiving the word to signify, beak, fang, and claw, the fiendish ancient enemy of the roasting day of yore, heard and echoed. Sleepless at the work of the sapper, in preparation for the tiger's leap, Rome is keen to spy the foothold of English stability, and her clasp of a pillar of the structure sends tremors to our foundations.

The coupling of Rome and England's wealthiest nobleman struck a match to terrorize the Fire Insurance of Smithfield. That meteoric, intractable, perhaps wicked, but popular, reputedly clever, manifestly evil-

starred, enormously wealthy, young Earl of Fleetwood, wedded to an adventuress, and a target for the scandals emanating from the woman, was daily, without omission of a day, seen walking Piccadilly pavement in company once more with the pervert, the Jesuit agent, that crafty Catesby of a Lord Feltre, arm in arm the pair of them, and uninterruptedly conversing, utterly unlike Englishmen. Mr. Rose Mackrell passed them, and his breezy salutation of the earl was unobserved in my lord's vacant glass optics, as he sketched the scene. London had reports of the sinister tempter and the imperilled young probationer undisguisedly entering the Roman Catholic chapel of a fashionable district—chapel erected on pervert's legacies, down a small street at the corner of a grandee square, by tolerance or connivance of our constabulary,—entering it linked; and linked they issued, their heads bent; for the operation of the tonsure, you would say. Two English noblemen! But is there no legislation to stop the disease? Our female government asks it vixenly of our impotent male; which pretends, beneath an air of sympathy, that we should abstain from any compulsory action upon the law to interfere, though the situation is confessedly grave; and the aspect men assume is correspondingly, to the last degree provokingly, grave—half alive that they are, or void of patriotism, or Babylonian at heart!

Lord Fleetwood's yet undocked old associates vowed he 'smelt strong' of the fumes of the whirled silver censer-balls. His disfavour had caused a stoppage of supplies, causing vociferous abomination of their successful rivals, the Romish priests. Captain Abrane sniffed, loud as a horse, condemnatory as a cat, in speaking of

him. He said: 'By George, it comes to this; we shall have to turn Catholics for a loan!' Watchdogs of the three repeated the gigantic gambler's melancholy roar. And, see what gap, cried the ratiocination of alarm, see the landslip it is in our body, national and religious, when exalted personages go that way to Rome!

As you and the world have reflected in your sager moods, an ordinary pebble may roll where it likes, for individualism of the multitudinously obscure little affects us. Not so the costly jewel, which is a congregation of ourselves, in our envies and longings and genuflexions thick about its lustres. The lapses of precious things must needs carry us, both by weight and example, and it will ceaselessly be, that we are possessed by the treasure we possess, we hang on it. A still, small voice of England's mind under panic sent up these truisms containing admonitions to the governing Ladies. They, the most conservative of earthly bodies, clamoured in return, like cloud-scud witches that have caught fire at their skirts from the torches of marsh-fire radicals. They cited for his arrest the titled millionaire who made a slide for the idiots of the kingdom; they stigmatized our liberty as a sophistry, unless we have in it the sustaining element of justice;—and where is the justice that punishes his country for any fatal course a mad young Crœsus may take! They shackled the hands of testators, who endangered the salvation of coroneted boys by having sanction to bequeath vast wealth in bulk. They said, in truth, that it was the liberty to be un-Christian. Finally, they screeched a petitioning of Parliament to devote a night to a sitting, and empower the Lord Chancellor to lay an embargo on the personal as well as the real estate of wealthy perverts; in common

prudence depriving Rome of the coveted means to turn our religious weapons against us.

The three guardian ladies and their strings of followers headed over the fevered and benighted town, as the records of the period attest, windpiping these and similar Solan notes from the undigested cropful of alarms Lord Fleetwood's expected conduct crammed into them. They and all the world traced his present madness to the act foregoing: that marriage! They reviewed it to deplore it, every known incident and the numbers imagined; yet merely to deplore: frightful comparisons of then with now rendered the historical shock to the marriage market matter for a sick smile. Evil genius of some sort beside him the wealthy young nobleman is sure to have. He has got rid of one to take up with a viler. First, a sluttish trollop of German origin is foisted on him for life; next, he is misled to abjure the faith of his fathers for Rome. But patently, desperation in the husband of such a wife weakened his resistance to the Roman Catholic pervert's insinuations. There we punctuate the full stop to our inquiries; we have the secret.

And upon that, suddenly comes a cyclonic gust; and gossip twirls, whines, and falls to the twanging of an entirely new set of notes, that furnish a tolerably agreeable tune, on the whole. O hear! The Marchioness of Arpington proclaims not merely acquaintanceship with Lord Fleetwood's countess, she professes esteem for the young person. She has been heard to say, that if the Principality of Wales were not a royal title, a dignity of the kind would be conferred by the people of those mountains on the Countess of Fleetwood: such unbounded enthusiasm there was

for her character when she sojourned down there. As it is, they do speak of her in their Welsh by some title. Their bards are offered prizes to celebrate her deeds. You remember the regiment of mounted Welsh gentlemen escorting her to her Kentish seat, with their band of the three-stringed harps! She is well-born, educated, handsome, a perfectly honest woman, and a sound Protestant. Quite the reverse of Lord Fleetwood's seeking to escape her, it is she who flies; she cannot forgive him his cruelties and infidelities: and that is the reason why he threatens to commit the act of despair. Only she can save him! She has flown for refuge to her uncle, Lord Levellier's house at a place named Croridge—not in the gazetteer—hard of access and a home of poachers, where shooting goes on hourly; but most picturesque and romantic, as she herself is! Lady Arpington found her there, nursing one of the wounded, and her uncle on his death-bed; obdurate all round against her husband, but pensive when supplicated to consider her country endangered by Rome. She is a fervent patriot. The tales of her Whitechapel origin, and heading mobs wielding bludgeons, are absolutely false, traceable to scandalizing anecdotists like Mr. Rose Mackrell. She is the beautiful example of an injured wife doing honour to her sex in the punishment of a faithless husband, yet so little cherishing her natural right to deal him retribution, that we dare hope she will listen to her patriotic duty in consenting to the reconcilement, which is Lord Fleetwood's alternative:—his wife or Rome! They say she has an incommunicable charm, accounting for the price he puts on her now she holds aloof and he misses it. Let her but rescue him from England's

most vigilant of her deadly enemies, she will be entitled to the nation's lasting gratitude. She has her opportunity for winning the Anglican English, as formerly she won the Dissenter Welsh. She may yet be the means of leading back the latter to our fold.

A notation of the cries in air at a time of surgent public excitement can hardly yield us music; and the wording of them, by the aid of compounds and transplants, metaphors and similes only just within range of the arrows of Phoebus' bow (*i.e.* the farthest flight known), would, while it might imitate the latent poetry, expose venturesome writers to the wrath of a people commendably believing their language a perfected instrument when they prefer the request for a plateful, and commissioning their literary police to brain audacious experimenters who enlarge or wing it beyond the downright aim at that mark. The gossip of the time must therefore appear commonplace, in resemblance to the panting *ventre à terre* of the toad, instead of the fiery steed's; although we have documentary evidence that our country's heart was moved; —'in no common degree,' Dr. Glossop's lucid English has it, at the head of a broadsheet ballad discovered by him; wherein the connubially inclined young earl and the nation in turn beseech the countess to resume her place at Esslemont, and so save both from a terrific dragon's jaw, scarlet as the infernal flames; described as fascinating—

> 'The classes with the crests,
> And the lining to their vests,
> Till down they jump, and empty leave
> A headless trunk that rests.'

These ballads, burlesque to present reading, mainly

intended for burlesque by the wits who dogged without much enlivening an anxious period of our history, when corner-stones were falling the way the young lord of the millions threatened to go, did, there is little doubt, according to another part of their design (Rose Mackrell boasts it indirectly in his Memoirs), interpret public opinion, that is, the English humour of it—the half laugh in their passing and not simulated shudder.

Carinthia had a study of the humours of English character in the person of the wounded man she nursed on little Croridge, imagining it the most unobserved of English homes, and herself as unimportant an object. Daniel Charner took his wound, as he took his medicine and his posset from her hand, kindly, and seemed to have a charitable understanding of Lord Levellier now that the old nobleman had driven a pellet of lead into him and laid him flat. It pleased him to assure her that his mates were men of their word, and had promised to pay the old lord with 'a rouse' for it, nothing worse. Her father used to speak of the 'clean hearts of the English' as to the husbanding of revenge; that is, the 'no spot of bad blood' to vitiate them. Captain John Peter seconded all good-humoured fighters 'for the long account': they will surely win; and it was one of his maxims: '*My foe can spoil my face; he beats me if he spoils my temper.*'

Recalling the scene of her bridal day—the two strong Englishmen at the shake of hands, that had spoiled one another's faces, she was enlightened with a comprehension of her father's love for the people; seeing the spiritual of the gross ugly picture, as not every

man can do, and but a warrior Joan among women. Chillon shall teach the Spanish people English heartiness, she thought. Lord Fleetwood's remarks on the expedition would have sufficed to stamp it righteous with her; that was her logic of the low valuation of him. She fancied herself absolutely released at his departure. Neither her sister Riette nor her friend Owain, administering sentiment and common sense to her by turns, could conceive how the passion for the recovery of her brother's military name fed the hope that she might aid in it, how the hope fed the passion. She had besides her hunger to be at the work she could do; her Chillon's glory for morning sky above it.

Such was the mind Lady Arpington brought the world's wisdom to bear upon; deeming it in the end female only in its wildness and obstinacy. Carinthia's answers were few, barely varied. Her repetition of 'my brother' irritated the great lady, whose argument was directed to make her see that these duties toward her brother were primarily owing to her husband, the man she would reclaim and could guide. And the Countess of Fleetwood's position, her duty to society, her dispensing of splendid hospitality, the strengthening of her husband to do his duty to the nation, the saving of him from a fatal step—from Rome; these were considerations for a reasonable woman to weigh before she threw up all to be off on the maddest of adventures. 'Inconceivable, my dear child!' Lady Arpington proceeded until she heard herself as droning.

Carinthia's unmoved aspect of courteous attention appeared to invoke the prolongation of the sermon it criticized. It had an air of reversing their positions

while she listened to the charge of folly, and incidentally replied.

Her reason for not fearing Roman Catholic encroachments was, she said, her having known good Catholics in the country she came from. For herself, she should die professing the faith of her father and mother. Behind her correct demeanour a rustic intelligence was exhibited. She appreciated her duty to her marriage oath: 'My husband's honour is quite safe with me.' Neither England nor religion, nor woman's proper devotion to a husband's temporal and spiritual welfare, had claims rivalling her devotion to her brother. She could not explain a devotion that instigated her to an insensate course. It seemed a kind of enthusiasm; and it was coldly spoken; in the tone referring to 'her husband's honour.' Her brother's enterprise had her approval because 'her mother's prayer was for him to serve in the English army.' By running over to take a side in a Spanish squabble? she was asked and answered: 'He will learn war; my Chillon will show his value; he will come back a tried soldier.'

She counted on his coming back? She did.

'I cannot take a step forward without counting on success. We know the chances we are to meet. My father has written of death. We do not fear it, so it is nothing to us. We shall go together; we shall not have to weep for one another.'

The strange young woman's avoidance of any popular sniffle of the pathetic had a recognized merit.

'Tell me,' Lady Arpington said abruptly; 'this maid of yours, who is to marry the secretary, or whatever he was—you are satisfied with her?'

'She is my dear servant Madge.' A cloud opened as Carinthia spoke the name. 'She will be a true wife to him. They will always be my friends.'

Nothing against the earl in that direction, apparently; unless his countess was blest with the density of frigidity.

Society's emissary sketched its perils for unprotected beautiful woman; an outline of the London quadrille Henrietta danced in; and she glanced at Carinthia and asked: 'Have you thought of it?'

Carinthia's eyes were on the great lady's. Their meaning was, 'You hit my chief thought.' They were read as her farthest thought. For the hint of Henrietta's weakness deadened her feelings with a reminder of warm and continued solicitations rebutted; the beautiful creature's tortures at the idea of her exile from England. An outwearied hopelessness expressed a passive sentiment very like indifference in the clear wide gaze. She replied: 'I have. My proposal to her was Cadiz, with both our young ones. She will not.'

And there is an end to that part of the question! Lady Arpington interpreted it, by the gaze more than the words, under subjection of the young woman's character. Nevertheless, she bore away Carinthia's consent to a final meeting with the earl at her house in London, as soon as things were settled at Croridge. Chillon, whom she saw, was just as hard, unforgiving, careless of his country's dearest interests; brother and sister were one heart of their one blood. She mentioned the general impression in town, that the countess and only she could save the earl from Rome. A flash of polite laughter was Chillon's response. But after her inspection of the elegant athlete, she did fancy it possible

for a young wife, even for Henrietta, to bear his name proudly in his absence—if that was worth a moment's consideration beside the serious issues involved in her appeal to the countess; especially when the suggestion regarding young wives left unprotected, delicately conveyed to the husband, had failed of its purpose. The handsome husband's brows fluttered an interrogation, as if her clear-obscure should be further lighted; and it could not be done. He weighed the wife by the measure of the sister, perhaps; or his military head had no room for either. His callousness to the danger of his country's disintegration, from the incessant, becoming overt, attacks of a foreign priesthood might—an indignant great lady's precipitation to prophecy said would—bring chastisement on him. She said it, and she liked Henrietta, vowing to defeat her forecast as well as she could in a land seeming forsaken by stable principles; its nobles breaking up its national church, going over to Rome, embracing the faith of the impostor Mahomet.

Gossip fed to the starvation bone of Lady Arpington's report, until one late afternoon, memorable for the breeding heat in the van of elemental artillery, newsboys waved damp sheets of fresh print through the streets, and society's guardians were brought to confess, in shame and gladness, that they had been growing sceptical of the active assistance of Providence. At first the 'Terrible explosion of gunpowder at Croridge' alarmed them lest the timely Power should have done too much. A day later the general agitation was pacified; Lady Arpington circulated the word 'safe,' and the world knew the disaster had not engulphed Lady Fleetwood's valuable life. She had the news by word

of mouth from the lovely Mrs. Kirby-Levellier, sister-in-law to the countess. We are convinced we have proof of Providence intervening when some terrific event of the number at its disposal accomplishes the thing and no more than the thing desired. Pitiful though it may seem for a miserly old lord to be blown up in his bed, it is necessarily a subject of congratulation if the life, or poor remnant of a life, sacrificed was an impediment to our righteous wishes. But this is a theme for the Dame, who would full surely have committed another breach of the treaty, had there not been allusion to her sisterhood's view of the government of human affairs.

On the day preceding the catastrophe, Chillon's men returned to work. He and Carinthia and Mr. Wythan lunched with Henrietta at Stoneridge. Walking down to Lekkatts, they were astounded to see the figure of the spectral old lord on the plank to the powder store, clad in his long black cloak, erect. He was crossing, he told them, to count his barrels; a dream had disturbed him. Chillon fell to rapid talk upon various points of business, and dispersed Lord Levellier's memory relating to his errand. Leaning on Carinthia's arm, he went back to the house, where he was put to bed in peace of mind. His resuscitated physical vigour blocked all speculation for the young people assembled at Stoneridge that night. They hardly spoke; they strangled thoughts forming as larvæ of wishes. Henrietta would be away to Lady Arpington's next day, Mr. Wythan to Wales. The two voyagers were sadder by sympathy than the two whom they were leaving to the clock's round of desert sameness. About ten at night Chillon and Mr. Wythan escorted Carinthia,

for the night's watch beside her uncle, down to Lekkatts. It was midway that the knocks on air, as of a muffled mallet at a door and at farther doors of caverns, smote their ears and shook the ground.

After an instant of the silence following a shock, Carinthia touched her brother's arm; and Chillon said: 'Not my powder!'

They ran till they had Lekkatts in sight. A half moon showed the house; it stood. Fifty paces below, a column of opal smoke had begun to wreathe and stretch a languid flag. The 'rouse' promised to Lord Levellier by Daniel Charner's humorous mates had hit beyond its aim. Intended to give him a start—or 'One-er in return,' it surpassed his angry shot at the body of them in effect.

Carinthia entered his room and saw that he was lying stretched restfully. She whispered of this to Chillon, and began upon her watch, reading her Spanish phrase-book; and she could have wept, if she had been a woman for tears. Her duty to stay in England with Chillon's fair wife crossed the beckoning pages like a black smoke. Her passion to go and share her brother's dangers left the question of its righteousness at each fall of the big breath.

Her uncle's grey head on his pillow was like a flint-stone in chalk under her look by light of dawn; the chin had dropped.

## CHAPTER XLVI

### A CHAPTER OF UNDERCURRENTS AND SOME SURFACE FLASHES

Thus a round and a good old English practical repartee, worthy a place in England's book of her historical popular jests; conceived ingeniously, no bit murderously, even humanely, if Englishmen are to be allowed indulgence of a jolly hit back for an injury—more a feint than a real stroke—gave the miserly veteran his final quake and cut Chillon's knot.

Lord Levellier dead of the joke detracted from the funny idea there had been in the anticipation of his hearing the libertine explosion of his grand new powder, and coming out cloaked to see what walls remained upright. Its cleverness, however, was magnified by the shades into which it had dispatched him. The man who started the 'rouse for old Griphard' was named: nor did he shuffle his honours off. Chillon accused him, and he regretfully grinned; he would have owned to it eloquently, excited by the extreme ingenuity, but humour at the criminal bar is an abject thing, that has to borrow from metaphysics for the expository words. He lacked them entirely, and as he could not, fronting his master, supply the defect with oaths, he drew up and let out on the dead old lord, who wanted a few pounds of blasting powder, like anything else in everybody's way. Chillon expected the lowest of his countrymen to show some degree of chivalry upon occasions like the present. He was too young to perceive how it is, that a block of our speech in the needed direction drives it

storming in another, not the one closely expressing us. Carinthia liked the man; she was grieved to hear of his having got the sack summarily, when he might have had a further month of service or a month's pay. Had not the workmen's forbearance been much tried? And they had not stolen, they had bought the powder, only intending to startle.

She touched her brother's native sense of fairness and vexed him with his cowardly devil of impatience, which kicked at a simply stupid common man, and behaved to a lordly offender, smelling rascal, civilly. Just as her father would have treated the matter, she said: 'Are we sorry for what has happened, Chillon?' The man had gone, the injustice was done; the master was left to reflect on the part played by his inheritance of the half share of ninety thousand pounds in his proper respect for Lord Levellier's memory. Harsh to an inferior is a horrible charge. But the position of debtor to a titled cur brings a worse for endurance. Knowing a part of Lord Fleetwood's message to Lord Levellier suppressed, the bride's brother, her chief guardian, had treated the omission as of no importance, and had all the while understood that he ought to give her his full guess at the reading of it: or so his racked mind understood it now. His old father had said: *A dumb tongue can be a heavy liar;* and, *Lies are usurers' coin we pay for ten thousand per cent.* His harshness in the past hour to a workman who had suffered with him and had not intended serious mischief was Chillon's unsounded motive for the resolution to be out of debt to the man he loathed. There is a Muse that smiles aloft surveying our acts from the well-springs.

Carinthia heard her brother's fuller version of the

earl's communication to her uncle before the wild day of her marriage. 'Not particularly fitted for the married state,' Chillon phrased it, saying: 'He seems to have known himself, he was honest so far.' She was advised to think it over, that the man was her husband.

She had her brother's heart in her breast, she could not misread him. She thought it over, and felt a slight drag of compassion for the reluctant bridegroom. That was a stretch long leagues distant from love with her; the sort of feeling one has for strange animals hurt: and she had in her childish blindness done him a hurt, and he had bitten her. He was a weak young nobleman; he had wealth for a likeness of strength; he had no glory about his head. Why had he not chosen a woman to sit beside him who would have fancied his coronet a glory and his luxury a kindness? But the poor young nobleman did not choose! The sadly comic of his keeping to the pledge of his word—his real wife—the tyrant of the tyrant—clothed him; the vision of him at the altar, and on the coach, and at the Royal Sovereign Inn, and into the dimness where a placidly smiling recollection met a curtain and lost the smile.

Suppose that her duty condemned her to stay in England on guard over Chillon's treasure! The perpetual struggle with a weak young nobleman of aimless tempers and rightabout changes, pretending to the part of husband, would, she foresaw, raise another figure of duty, enchaining a weak young woman. The world supported his pretension; and her passion to serve as Chillon's comrade sank at a damping because it was flame. Chillon had done that; Lady Arpington, to some extent; Henrietta more. A little incident, pointing in no direction, had left a shadow of a cloud, conse-

quent upon Lady Arpington's mention of Henrietta's unprotectedness. Stepping up the hill to meet her sister, on the morning of Henrietta's departure for London under convoy of Mr. Wythan, Carinthia's long sight spied Kit Ines, or a man like him, in the meadow between Lekkatts and Croridge. He stood before Henrietta, and vanished light-legged at a gesture. Henrietta was descending to take her leave of her busied husband; her cheeks were flushed; she would not speak of the fellow, except to reply, 'oh, a beggar,' and kept asking whether she ought not to stay at Stoneridge. And if she did she would lose the last of the Opera in London! How could she help to investigate the cause of an explosion so considerate to them? She sang snatches of melodies, clung to her husband, protested her inability to leave him, and went, appearing torn away. As well bid healthy children lie abed on a bright summer morning, as think of holding this fair young woman bound to the circle of safety when she has her view of pleasure sparkling like the shore-sea mermaid's mirror.

Suspicions were not of the brood Carinthia's bosom harboured. Suspicion of Chillon's wife Carinthia could not feel. An uncaptained vessel in the winds on high seas was imagined without a picturing of it. The apparition of Ines, if it was he, would not fit with any conjecture. She sent a warning to Madge, and at the same time named the girl's wedding day for her; pained in doing it. She had given the dear girl her word that she would be present at this of all marriages. But a day or two days or more would have to be spent away from Chillon; and her hunger for every hour beside her brother confessed to the war going on within her, as to

which was her holier duty, the one on the line of her inclinations, or that one pointing to luxury—choice between a battle-horse and a cushioned-chair; between companionship with her glorious brother facing death, and submission to a weak young nobleman claiming his husband's rights over her. She had submitted, had forgotten his icy strangeness, had thought him love; and hers was a breast for love, it was owned by the sobbing rise of her breast at the thought. And she might submit again—in honour? scorning the husband? Chillon scorned him. Yet Chillon left the decision to her, specified his excuses. And Henrietta and Owain, Lady Arpington, Gower Woodseer, all the world—Carinthia shuddered at the world's blank eye on what it directs for the acquiescence of the woman. That shred of herself she would become, she felt herself becoming it when the view of her career beside her brother waned. The dead Rebecca living in her heart was the only soul among her friends whose voice was her own against the world's.

But there came a turn where she and Rebecca separated. Rebecca's insurgent wishes taking shape of prophecy, robbed her of her friend Owain, to present her an impossible object, that her mind could not compass or figure. She bade Rebecca rest and let her keep the fancy of Owain as her good ghost of a sun in the mist of a frosty morning; sweeter to her than an image of love, though it were the very love, the love of maidens' dreams, bursting the bud of romance, issuing its flower. Delusive love drove away with a credulous maiden, under an English heaven, on a coach and four, from a windy hill-top, to a crash below, and a stunned recovery in the street of small

shops, mud, rain, gloom, language like musket-fire and the wailing wounded.

*No regrets*, her father had said; *they unman the heart we want for to-morrow.* She kept her look forward at the dead wall Chillon had thrown up. He did not reject her company; his prospect of it had clouded; and there were allusions to Henrietta's loneliness. 'His Carin could do her service by staying, if she decided that way.' Her enthusiasm dropped to the level of life's common ground. With her sustainment gone, she beheld herself a titled doll, and had sternly to shut her eyes on the behind scenes, bar any shadowy approaches of womanly softness; thinking her father's daughter dishonoured in the submissive wife of the weak young nobleman Chillon despised as below the title of man.

Madge and Gower came to Stoneridge on their road to London three days before their union. Madge had no fear of Ines, but said: 'I never let Mr. Gower out of my sight.' Perforce of studying him with the thirsty wonder consequent upon his proposal to her, she had got fast hold of the skirts of his character; she 'knew he was happy because he was always making her laugh at herself.' Her manner of saying, 'She hoped to give him a comfortable home, so that he might never be sorry for what he had done,' was toned as in a church, beautiful to her mistress. Speaking of my lord's great kindness, her eyes yearned for a second and fell humbly. She said of Kit Ines, 'He 's found a new "paytron," Sarah says Mr. Woodseer tells her, my lady. It 's another nobleman, Lord Brailstone, has come into money lately and hired him for his pugilist when it 's not horse-racing.' Gower spoke of thanks to Lord

Fleetwood for the independence allowing him to take a wife and settle to work in his little Surrey home. He, too, showed he could have said more and was advised not to push at a shut gate. My lord would attend their wedding as well as my lady, Carinthia heard from Madge; counting it a pity that wealthy noblemen had no professions to hinder the doing of unprofitable things.

Her sensibility was warmer on the wedding day of these two dear ones. He graced the scene, she admitted, when reassured by his perfect reserve toward her personally. He was the born nobleman in his friendliness with the bridal pair and respectfulness to Mr. Woodseer. High social breeding is an exquisite performance on the instrument we are, and his behaviour to her left her mind at liberty for appreciation of it. Condescension was not seen, his voice had no false note. During the ceremony his eyelids blinked rapidly. At the close, he congratulated the united couple, praising them each for the wisdom of their choice. He said to his countess: 'This is one of the hopeful marriages; chiefly of your making.'

She replied: 'My prayers will be for them always.'

'They are fortunate who have your prayers,' he said, and turned to Sarah Winch. She was to let him know when she also had found *her* 'great philosopher.' Sarah was like a fish on a bank, taking gasps at the marvel of it all; she blushed the pale pink of her complexion, and murmured of 'happiness.' Gower had gone headlong into happiness, where philosophers are smirkers and mouthers of ordinary stuff. His brightest remark was to put the question to his father: 'The three good things of the Isle of Britain?' and treble the name of

Madge Woodseer for a richer triad than the Glamorgan man could summon. Pardonably foolish; but mindful of a past condition of indiscipline, Nature's philosopher said to the old minister: 'Your example saved me for this day at a turn of my road, sir.' Nature's poor wild scholar paid that tribute to the regimental sectarian. Enough for proud philosophy to have done the thing demonstrably right, Gower's look at his Madge and the world said. That 'European rose of the coal-black order,' as one of his numerous pictures of her painted the girl, was a torch in a cavern for dusky redness at her cheeks. Her responses beneath the book Mr. Woodseer held open had flashed a distant scene through Lord Fleetwood. Quaint to notice was her reverence for the husband she set on a towering monument, and her friendly, wifely, whispered jogs at the unpractical creature's forgetfulness of his wraps, his books, his writing-desk—on this tremendous occasion, his pipe. Again the earl could have sworn, that despite her antecedents, she brought her husband honest dower, as surely as she gave the lucky Pagan a whole heart; and had a remarkably fine bust to house the organ, too; and a clarionet of a voice, curiously like her mistress's. And not a bad fellow, but a heathen dog, a worshipper of Nature, walked off with the girl, whose voice had the ring of Carinthia's. The Powers do not explain their dispensations.

These two now one by united good-will for the junction Lord Fleetwood himself drove through London to the hills, where another carriage awaited them by his orders, in the town of London's race-course. As soon as they were seated he nodded to them curtly from his box, and drove back, leaving them puzzled. But his

countess had not so very coldly seen him start his horses to convey the modest bridal pair. His impulses to kindness could be politic. Before quitting Whitechapel, she went with Sarah to look at the old shop of the fruits and vegetables. They found it shut, untenanted; Mr. Woodseer told them that the earl was owner of it by recent purchase, and would not lease it. He had to say why; for the countess was dull to the notion of a sentimental desecration in the occupying of her bed-chamber by poor tradespeople. She was little flattered. The great nobleman of her imagination when she lay there dwindled to a whimsy infant, despot of his nursery, capricious with his toys; likely to damage himself, if left to himself.

How it might occur, she heard hourly from her hostess, Lady Arpington; from Henrietta as well, in different terms. He seemed to her no longer the stationed nobleman, but one of other idle men, and the saddest of young men. His weakness cast a net on her. Worse than that drag of compassion, she foresaw the chance of his having experience of her own weakness, if she was to be one among idle women: she might drop to the love of him again. Chillon's damping of her enthusiasm sank her to a mere breathing body, miserably an animal body, no comrade for a valiant brother; this young man's feeble consort, perhaps: and a creature thirsting for pleasure, disposed to sigh in the prospect of caresses. Enthusiasm gone, her spirited imagination of active work on the field of danger beside her brother flapped a broken wing.

She fell too low in her esteem to charge it upon Henrietta that she stood hesitating, leaning on the hated side of the debate; though she could almost

have blamed Chillon for refusing her his positive counsel, and not ordering his wife to follow him. Once Lady Arpington, reasoning with her on behalf of the husband who sought reconciliation, sneered at her brother's project, condemned it the more for his resolve to carry it out now that he had means. The front of a shower sprang to Carinthia's eyelids. Now that her brother had means, he from whom she might be divided was alert to keep his engagement and study war on the field, as his father had done in foreign service, offering England a trained soldier, should his country subsequently need him. The contrast of her heroic brother and a luxurious idle lord scattering blood of bird or stag, and despising the soldier's profession, had a singular bitter effect, consequent on her scorn of words to defend the man her heart idolized. This last of young women for weeping wept in the lady's presence.

The feminine trick was pardoned to her because her unaccustomed betrayal of that form of enervation was desired. It was read as woman's act of self-pity over her perplexity: which is a melting act with the woman when there is no man to be dissolved by it. So far Lady Arpington judged rightly; Carinthia's tears, shed at the thought of her brother under the world's false judgement of him, left her spiritless to resist her husband's advocates. Unusual as they were, almost unknown, they were thunder-drops and shook her.

All for the vivid surface, the Dame frets at stresses laid on undercurrents. There is no bridling her unless the tale be here told of how Lord Brailstone in his frenzy of the disconcerted rival boasted over town the counterstroke he had dealt Lord Fleetwood, by sending

Mrs. Levellier a statement of the latter nobleman's base plot to thwart her husband's wager, with his foul agent, the repentant and well-paid ruffian in person, to verify every written word. The town's conception of the necessity for the reunion of the earl and countess was too intense to let exciting scandal prosper. Moreover, the town's bright anticipation of its concluding festivity on the domain of Calesford argued such tattle down to a baffled adorer's malice. The Countess of Cressett, having her cousin, the beautiful Mrs. Kirby-Levellier, in her house, has denied Lord Brailstone admission at her door, we can affirm. He has written to her vehemently, has called a second time, has vowed publicly that Mrs. Levellier shall have her warning against Lord Fleetwood. The madness of jealousy was exhibited. Lady Arpington pronounced him in his conduct unworthy the name of gentleman. And how foolish the scandal he circulates! Lord Fleetwood's one aim is to persuade his offended wife to take her place beside him. He expresses regret everywhere, that the death of her uncle Lord Levellier withholds her presence from Calesford during her term of mourning; and that he has given his word for the fête on a particular day, before London runs quite dry. His pledge of his word is notoriously inviolate. The Countess of Cressett—an extraordinary instance of a thrice married woman corrected in her addiction to play by her alliance with a rakish juvenile—declares she performs the part of hostess at the request of the Countess of Fleetwood. Perfectly convincing. The more so (if you have the gossips' keen sent of a deduction) since Lord Fleetwood and young Lord Cressett and the Jesuit Lord Feltre have been seen confabulating with very

sacerdotal countenances indeed. Three English noblemen! not counting eighty years for the whole three! And dear Lady Cressett fears she may be called on to rescue her boy-husband from a worse enemy than the green tables, if Lady Fleetwood should unhappily prove unyielding, as it shames the gentle sex to imagine she will be. In fact, we know through Mrs. Levellier, the meeting of reconciliation between the earl and the countess comes off at Lady Arpington's, by her express arrangement, to-morrow: 'none too soon,' the expectant world of London declared it.

The meeting came to pass three days before the great day at Calesford. Carinthia and her lord were alone together. This had been his burning wish at Croridge, where he could have poured his heart to her and might have moved the wife's. But she had formed her estimate of him there: she had, in the comparison or clash of forces with him, grown to contemplate the young man of wealth and rank, who had once been impatient of an allusion to her father, and sought now to part her from her brother—stop her breathing of fresh air. Sensationally, too, her ardour for the exercise of her inherited gifts attributed it to him that her father's daughter had lived the mean existence in England, pursuing a husband, hounded by a mother's terrors. The influences environing her and pressing her to submission sharpened her perusal of the small object largely endowed by circumstances to demand it. She stood calmly discoursing, with a tempered smile: no longer a novice in the social manner. An equal whom he had injured waited for his remarks, gave ready replies; and he, bowing to the visible equality, chafed at a sense of inferiority following

his acknowledgment of it. He was alone with her, and next to dumb; she froze a full heart. As for his heart, it could not speak at all, it was a swinging lump. The rational view of the situation was exposed to her; and she listened to that favourably, or at least attentively; but with an edge to her civil smile when he hinted of entertainments, voyages, travels, an excursion to her native mountain land. Her brother would then be facing death. The rational view, she admitted, was one to be considered. Yes, they were married; they had a son; they were bound to sink misunderstandings, in the interests of their little son. He ventured to say that the child was a link uniting them; and she looked at him. He blinked rapidly, as she had seen him do of late, but kept his eyes on her through the nervous flutter of the lids; his pride making a determined stand for physical mastery, though her look was but a look. Had there been reproach in it, he would have found the voice to speak out. Her look was a cold sky above a hungering man. She froze his heart from the marble of her own.

And because she was for adventuring with her brother at bloody work of civil war in the pay of a foreign government!—he found a short refuge in that mute sneer, and was hurled from it by an apparition of the Welsh scene of the bitten infant, and Carinthia volunteering to do the bloody work which would have saved it; which he had contested, ridiculed. Right then, her insanity now conjured the wretched figure of him opposing the martyr her splendid humaneness had offered her to be, and dominated his reason, subjected him to admire—on to worship of the woman, whatever she might do. Just such a feeling for a

woman he had dreamed of in his younger time, doubting that he would ever meet the fleshly woman to impose it. His heart broke the frost she breathed. Yet, if he gave way to the run of speech, he knew himself unmanned, and the fatal habit of superiority stopped his tongue after he had uttered the name he loved to speak, as nearest to the embrace of her.

'Carinthia—so I think, as I said, we both see the common sense of the position. I regret over and over again—we 'll discuss all that when we meet after this Calesford affair. I shall have things to say. You will overlook, I am sure—well, men are men !—or try to. Perhaps I 'm not worse than—we 'll say, some. You will, I know,—I have learnt it,—be of great service, help to me ; double my value, I believe ; more than double it. You will receive me—here ? Or at Croridge or Esslemont ; and alone together, as now, I beg.'

That was what he said. Having said it, his escape from high tragics in the comfortable worldly tone rejoiced him ; to some extent also the courteous audience she gave him. And her hand was not refused. Judging by her aspect, the plain common-sense ground of their situation was accepted for the best opening step to their union ; though she must have had her feelings beneath it, and God knew that he had ! Her hand was friendly. He could have thanked her for yielding her hand without a stage scene ; she had fine breeding by nature. The gracefullest of trained ladies could not have passed through such an interview so perfectly in the right key ; and this was the woman he had seen at the wrestle with hideous death to save a muddy street-child ! She touched the gentleman in

him. Hard as it was while he held the hand of the wife, his little son's mother, who might be called his bride, and drew him by the contact of their blood to a memory, seeming impossible, some other world's attested reality,—she the angel, he the demon of it,—unimaginable, yet present, palpable, a fact beyond his mind, he let her hand fall scarce pressed. Did she expect more than the common sense of it to be said? The 'more' was due to her, and should partly be said at their next meeting for the no further separating; or else he would vow in his heart to spread it out over a whole life's course of wakeful devotion, with here and there a hint of his younger black nature. Better that—except for a desire seizing him to make sacrifice of the demon he had been, offer him up hideously naked to her mercy. But it was a thing to be done by hints, by fits, by small doses. She could only gradually be brought to the comprehension of how the man or demon found indemnification under his yoke of marriage in snatching her, to torment, perhaps betray; and solace for the hurt to his pride in spreading a snare for the beautiful Henrietta. A confession! It could be to none but the priest.

Knowledge of Carinthia would have urged him to the confession straightway. In spite of horror, the task of helping to wash a black soul white would have been her compensation for loss of companionship with her soldier brother. She would have held hot iron to the rabid wound and come to a love of the rescued sufferer.

It seemed to please her when he spoke of Mr. Rose Mackrell's applications to get back his volume of her father's Book of Maxims.

'There is mine,' she said.

For the sake of winning her quick gleam at any word of the bridal couple, he conjured a picture of her Madge and his Gower, saying: 'That marriage—as you will learn—proves him honest from head to foot; as she is, in her way, too.'

'Oh, she is,' was the answer.

'We shall be driving down to them very soon, Carinthia.'

'It will delight them to see either of us, my lord.'

'My lady, adieu until I am over with this Calesford,' he gestured, as in fetters.

She spared him the my lording as she said adieu, sensitive as she was, and to his perception now.

Lady Arpington had a satisfactory two minutes with him before he left the house. London town, on the great day at Calesford, interchanged communications, to the comforting effect, that the Countess of Fleetwood would reign over the next entertainment.

## CHAPTER XLVII

### THE LAST: WITH A CONCLUDING WORD BY THE DAME

It is of seemingly good augury for the cause of a suppliant man, however little for the man himself, when she who has much to pardon can depict him in a manner that almost smiles, not unlike a dandling nurse the miniature man-child sobbing off to sleep after a frenzy; an example of a genus framed for excuses, and he more than others. Chillon was amused up to inquisitive surprise by Carinthia's novel idea of her

formerly dreaded riddle of a husband. As she sketched the very rational alliance proposed to her, and his kick at the fetters of Calesford, a shadowy dash for an image of the solicitous tyrant was added perforce to complete the scene; following which, her head moved sharply, the subject was flung over her shoulder.

She was developing; she might hold her ground with the husband, if the alliance should be resumed; and she would be a companion for Henrietta in England: she was now independent, as to money, and she could break an intolerable yoke without suffering privation. He kept his wrath under, determined not to use his influence either way, sure though he was of her old father's voting for her to quit the man and enter the field where qualities would be serviceable. The man probably feared a scandal more than the loss of his wife in her going. He had never been thrashed—the sole apology Chillon discovered for him, in a flushed review of the unavenged list of injuries Carinthia had sustained. His wise old father insisted on the value of an early thrashing to trim and shape the growth of most young men. There was no proof of Lord Fleetwood's having schemed to thwart his wager, so he put that accusation by: thinking for an instant, that if the man desired to have his wife with him, and she left the country with her brother, his own act would recoil; or if she stayed to hear of a villany, Carinthia's show of scorn could lash. Henrietta praised my lord's kindness. He had been one of the adorers—as what man would would not be!—and upon her at least (he could hardly love her husband) he had not wreaked his disappointment. A young man of huge wealth, having nothing to do but fatten his whims, is the monster a rich

country breeds under the blessing of peace. His wife, if a match for him, has her work traced out:—mean work for the child of their father, Chillon thought. She might be doing braver, more suitable to the blood in her veins. But women have to be considered as women, not as possible heroines; and supposing she held her own with this husband of hers; which meant, judging by the view of their unfolded characters at present, a certain command of the freakish beast; she, whatever her task, would not be the one set trotting. He came to his opinion through the estimate he had recently formed of Lord Fleetwood, and a study of his changed sister.

Her brows gloomed at a recurrence to that subject. Their business of the expedition absorbed her, each detail, all the remarks he quoted of his chief, hopeful or weariful; for difficulties with the Spanish Government, and with the English too, started up at every turn; and the rank and file of the contingent were mostly a rough lot, where they were rather better than soaked weeds. A small body of trained soldiers had sprung to the call to arms; here and there an officer could wheel a regiment.

Carinthia breasted discouragement. 'Father said the English learn from blows, Chillon.'

'He might have added, they lose half their number by having to learn from blows, Carin.'

'He said, "Let me lead Britons!"'

'When the canteen 's fifty leagues to the rear, yes!'

'Yes, it is a wine country,' she sighed. 'But would the Spaniards have sent for us if their experience had told them they could not trust us?'

Chillon brightened rigorously: 'Yes, yes; there 's

just a something about our men at their best, hard to find elsewhere. We 're right in thinking that. And our chief 's the right man.'

'He is Owain's friend and countryman,' said Carinthia, and pleased her brother for talking like a girl, in the midst of methodical calculations of the cost of this and that, to purchase the supplies he would need. She had an organising head. On her way down from London she had drawn on instructions from a London physician of old Peninsula experience to pencil a list of the medical and surgical stores required by a campaigning army; she had gained information of the London shops where they were to be procured; she had learned to read medical prescriptions for the composition of drugs. And she was at her Spanish still, not behind him in the ordinary dialogue, and able to correct him on points of Spanish history relating to fortresses, especially the Basque. A French bookseller had supplied her with the Vicomte d'Eschargue's recently published volume of a *Travels in Catalonia.* Chillon saw paragraphs marked, pages dog-eared, for reference. At the same time, the question of Henrietta touched her anxiously. Lady Arpington's hints had sunk into them both.

'I have thought of St. Jean de Luz, Chillon, if Riette would consent to settle there. French people are friendly. You expect most of your work in and round the Spanish Pyrenees.'

'Riette alone there?' said he, and drew her by her love of him into his altered mind; for he did not object to his wife's loneliness at Cadiz when their plan was new.

London had taught her that a young woman in the giddy heyday of her beauty has to be guarded; her

belonging to us is the proud burden involving sacrifices. But at St. Jean de Luz, if Riette would consent to reside there, Lord Fleetwood's absence and the neighbourhood of the war were reckoned on to preserve his yokefellow from any fit of the abominated softness which she had felt in one premonitory tremor during their late interview, and deemed it vile compared with the life of action and service beside, almost beside, her brother, sharing his dangers at least. She would have had Chillon speak peremptorily to his wife regarding the residence on the Spanish borders, adding, in a despair: 'And me with her to protect her!'

'Unfair to Riette, if she can't decide voluntarily,' he said.

All he refrained from was, the persuading her to stay in England and live reconciled with the gaoler of the dungeon, as her feelings pictured it.

Chillon and Carinthia journeyed to London for purchases and a visit to lawyer, banker, and tradesmen, on their way to meet his chief and Owain Wythan at Southampton. They lunched with Livia. The morrow was the great Calesford day; Henrietta carolled of it. Lady Arpington had been afflictingly demure on the theme of her presence at Calesford within her term of mourning. 'But I don't mourn, and I'm not related to the defunct, and I can't be denied the pleasure invented for my personal gratification,' Henrietta's happy flippancy pouted at the prudish objections. Moreover, the adored Columelli was to be her slave of song. The termination of the London season had been postponed a whole week for Calesford: the utmost possible strain; and her presence was understood to represent the Countess of Fleetwood, temporarily in decorous retire-

ment. Chillon was assured by her that the earl had expressed himself satisfied with his wife's reasonableness. 'The rest will follow.' Pleading on the earl's behalf was a vain effort, but she had her grounds for painting Lord Fleetwood's present mood to his countess in warm colours. 'Nothing short of devotion, Chillon!' London's extreme anxiety to see them united, and the cause of it, the immense good Janey could do to her country, should certainly be considered by her, Henrietta said. She spoke feverishly. A mention of St. Jean de Luz for a residence inflicted, it appeared, a more violent toothache than she had suffered from the proposal of quarters in Cadiz. And now her husband had money? . . . she suggested his reinstatement in the English army. Chillon hushed that: his chief had his word. Besides, he wanted schooling in war. Why had he married! His love for her was the answer; and her beauty argued for the love. But possessing her, he was bound to win her a name. So his reasoning ran to an accord with his military instincts and ambition. Nevertheless, the mournful strange fact she recalled, that they had never waltzed together since they were made one, troubled his countenance in the mirror of hers. Instead of the waltz, grief, low worries, dulness, an eclipse of her, had been the beautiful creature's portion. It established mighty claims to a young husband's indulgence. She hummed a few bars of his favourite old Viennese waltz, with 'Chillon!' invitingly and reproachfully. His loathing of Lord Fleetwood had to withstand an envious jump at the legs in his vision of her partner on the morrow. He said: 'You 'll think of someone absent.'

'You really do wish me to go, my darling? It is

Chillon's wish?' She begged for the words; she had them, and then her feverishness abated to a simple sparkling composure.

Carinthia had observed her. She was heart-sick under pressure of thoughts the heavier for being formless. They signified in the sum her doom to see her brother leave England for the war, and herself crumble to pieces from the imagined figure of herself beside him on or near the field. They could not be phrased, for they accused the beloved brother of a weakness in the excessive sense of obligation to the beautiful woman who had wedded him. Driving down to Southampton by the night-coach, her tenderness toward Henrietta held other thoughts unshaped, except one, that moved in its twilight, murmuring of how the love of pleasure keeps us blind children. And how the innocents are pushed by it to snap at wicked bait, which the wealthy angle with, pointed a charitable index on some of our social story. The Countess Livia, not an innocent like Henrietta, had escaped the poisoned tongues by contracting a third marriage—'in time!' Lady Arpington said; and the knotty question was presented to a young mind: Why are the innocents tempted to their ruin, and the darker natures allowed an escape? Any street-boy could have told her of the virtue in quick wits. But her unexercised reflectiveness was on the highroad of accepted doctrines, with their chorus of the moans of gossips for supernatural intervention to give us justice. She had not learnt that those innocents, pushed by an excessive love of pleasure, are for the term lower in the scale than their wary darker cousins, and must come to the diviner light of intelligence through suffering.

However, the result of her meditations was to show her she was directed to be Henrietta's guardian. After that, she had no thoughts; travelling beside Chillon, she was sheer sore feeling, as of a body aching for its heart plucked out. The bitterness of the separation to come between them prophesied a tragedy. She touched his hand. It was warm now.

During six days of travels from port to port along the Southern and Western coasts, she joined in the inspection of the English contingent about to be shipped. They and their chief and her brother were plain to sight, like sample print of a book's first page, blank sheets for the rest of the volume. If she might have been one among them, she would have dared the reckless forecast. Her sensations were those of a bird that has flown into a room, and beats wings against the ceiling and the window-panes. A close, hard sky, a transparent prison wall, narrowed her powers, mocked her soul. She spoke little; what she said impressed Chillon's chief, Owain Wythan was glad to tell her. The good friend had gone counter to the tide of her breast by showing satisfaction with the prospect that she would take her rightful place in the world. Her concentrated mind regarded the good friend as a phantom of a man, the world's echo. His dead Rebecca would have understood her passion to be her brother's comrade, her abasement in the staying at home to guard his butterfly. Owain had never favoured her project; he could not now perceive the special dangers Chillon would be exposed to in her separation from him. She had no means of explaining what she felt intensely, that dangers, death, were nothing to either of them, if they shared the fate together.

Her rejected petition to her husband for an allowance of money, on the day in Wales, became the vivid memory which brings out motives in its glow. Her husband hated her brother; and why? But the answer was lighted fierily down another avenue. A true husband, a lord of wealth, would have rejoiced to help the brother of his wife. He was the cause of Chillon's ruin and this adventure to restore his fortunes. Could she endure a close alliance with the man while her brother's life was imperilled? Carinthia rebuked her drowsy head for not having seen his reason for refusing at the time. 'How long I am before I see anything that does not stare in my face!' She was a married woman, whose order of mind rendered her singularly subject to the holiness of the tie; and she was a weak woman, she feared. Already, at intervals, now that action on a foreign field of the thunders and lightnings was denied, imagination revealed her dissolving to the union with her husband, and cried her comment on herself as the world's basest of women for submitting to it while Chillon's life ran risks; until finally she said: 'Not before I have my brother home safe!' an exclamation equal to a vow.

That being settled, some appearance of equanimity returned; she talked of the scarlet business as one she participated in as a distant spectator. Chillon's chief was hurrying the embarkation of his troops; within ten days the whole expedition would be afloat. She was to post to London for further purchases, he following to take leave of his wife and babe. Curiously, but hardly remarked on during the bustle of work, Livia had been the one to send her short account of the great day at Calesford; Henrietta, the born corre-

spondent, pencilling a couple of lines; she was well, dreadfully fatigued, rather a fright from a trip of her foot and fall over a low wire fence. Her message of love thrice underlined the repeated word.

Henrietta was the last person Carinthia would have expected to meet midway on the London road. Her name was called from a carriage as she drove up to the door of the Winchester hostelry, and in the lady, over whose right eye and cheek a covering fold of silk concealed a bandage, the voice was her sister Riette's. With her were two babes and their nursemaids.

'Chillon is down there—you have left him there?' Henrietta greeted her, saw the reply, and stepped out of her carriage. 'You shall kiss the children afterwards; come into one of the rooms, Janey.'

Alone together, before an embrace, she said, in the voice of tears hardening to the world's business, 'Chillon must not enter London. You see the figure I am. My character 's in as bad case up there—thanks to those men! My husband has lost his 'golden Riette.' When you see beneath the bandage! He will have the right to put me away. His 'beauty of beauties'! I 'm fit only to dress as a page-boy and run at his heels. My hero! my poor dear! He thinking I cared for nothing but amusement, flattery. Was ever a punishment so cruel to the noblest of generous husbands! Because I know he will overlook it, make light of it, never reproach his Riette. And the rose he married comes to him a shrivelled leaf of a pot-pourri heap. You haven't seen me yet. I was their "beautiful woman." I feel for my husband most.'

She took breath. Carinthia pressed her lips on the cheek sensible to a kiss, and Henrietta pursued, in

words liker to sobs: 'Anywhere, Cadiz, St. Jean de Luz, hospital work either, anywhere my husband likes, anything! I want to work, or I'll sit and rock the children. I'm awake at last. Janey, we're lambs to vultures with those men. I don't pretend I was the perfect fool. I thought myself so safe. I let one of them squeeze my hand one day, he swears. You know what a passion is; you have it for mountains and battles, I for music. I do remember, one morning before sunrise, driving back to town out of Windsor,—a dance, the officers of the Guards,—and my lord's trumpeter at the back of the coach blowing notes to melt a stone, I found a man's hand had mine. I remember Lord Fleetwood looking over his shoulder and smiling hard and lashing his horses. But listen—yes, at Calesford it happened. He —oh, hear the name, then; Chillon must never hear it; —Lord Brailstone was denied the right to step on Lord Fleetwood's grounds. The Opera company had finished selections from my *Pirata*. I went out for cool air; little Sir Meeson beside me. I had a folded gauze veil over my head, tied at the chin in a bow. Some one ran up to me—Lord Brailstone. He poured forth their poetry. They suppose it the wine for their "beautiful woman." I dare say I laughed or told him to go, and he began a tirade against Lord Fleetwood. There's no mighty difference between one beast of prey and another. Let me get away from them all! Though now!—they would not lift an eyelid. This is my husband's treasure returning to him. We have to be burnt to come to our senses. Janey—oh! you do well!—it was fiendish; old ballads, melodrama plays, I see they were built on men's deeds. Janey, I could not believe it, I have to believe, it is forced down my throat;—that man, your

husband, because he could not forgive my choosing Chillon, schemed for Chillon's ruin. I could not believe it until I saw in the glass this disfigured wretch he has made of me. Livia serves him, she hates him for the tyrant he is; she has opened my eyes. And not for himself, no, for his revenge on me, for my name to be as my face is. He tossed me to his dogs; fair game for them! You do well, Janey; he is capable of any villany. And has been calling at Livia's door twice a day, inquiring anxiously; begs the first appointment possible. He has no shame; he is accustomed to buy men and women; he thinks his money will buy my pardon, give my face a new skin, perhaps. A woman swears to you, Janey, by all she holds holy on earth, it is not the loss of her beauty—there will be a wrinkled patch on the cheek for life, the surgeon says; I am to bear a brown spot, like a bruised peach they sell at the fruit-shops cheap. Chillon's Riette! I think of that, the miserable wife I am for him without the beauty he loved so! I think of myself as guilty, a really guilty woman, when I compare my loss with my husband's.'

'Your accident, dearest Riette—how it happened?' Carinthia said, enfolding her.

'Because, Janey, what have I ever been to Chillon but the good-looking thing he was proud of? It 's gone. Oh, the accident. Brailstone had pushed little Corby away; he held my hand, kept imploring, he wanted the usual two minutes, and all to warn me against—I 've told you; and he saw Lord Fleetwood coming. I got my hand free, and stepped back, my head spinning; and I fell. That I recollect, and a sight of flames, like the end of the world. I fell on one of the oil-lamps bordering the grass; my veil lighted; I had fainted;

those two men saw nothing but one another; and little Sir Meeson was no help; young Lord Cressett dashed out the flames. They brought me to my senses for a second swoon. Livia says I woke moaning to be taken away from that hated Calesford. It was, oh! never to see that husband of yours again. Forgive him, if you can. Not I. I carry the mark of him to my grave. I have called myself "Skin-deep" ever since, day and night—the name I deserve.'

'We will return to Chillon together, my own,' said Carinthia. 'It may not be so bad.' And in the hope that her lovely sister exaggerated a defacement leaving not much worse than a small scar, her heart threw off its load of the recent perplexities, daylight broke through her dark wood. Henrietta brought her liberty. How far guilty her husband might be, she was absolved from considering; sufficiently guilty to release her. Upon that conclusion, pity for the awakened Riette shed purer tear-drops through the gratitude she could not restrain, could hardly conceal, on her sister's behalf and her own. Henrietta's prompt despatch to Croridge to fetch the babes, her journey down out of a sick-room to stop Chillon's visit to London, proved her an awakened woman, well paid for the stain on her face, though the stain were lasting. Never had she loved Henrietta, never shown her so much love, as on the road to the deepening Western hues. Her sisterly warmth surprised the woeful spotted beauty with a reflection that this martial Janey was after all a woman of feeling, one whom her husband, if he came to know it and the depth of it, the rich sound of it, would mourn in sackcloth to have lost.

And he did, the Dame interposes for the final word,

he mourned his loss of Carinthia Jane in sackcloth and ashes, notwithstanding that he had the world's affectionate condolences about him to comfort him, by reason of his ungovernable countess's misbehaviour once more, according to the report, in running away with a young officer to take part in a foreign insurrection; and when he was most the idol of his countrymen and countrywomen, which it was once his immoderate aim to be, he mourned her day and night, knowing her spotless, however wild a follower of her father's MAXIMS FOR MEN. He believed—some have said his belief was not in error—that the woman to aid and make him man and be the star in human form to him, was miraculously revealed on the day of his walk through the foreign pine forest, and his proposal to her at the ducal ball was an inspiration of his Good Genius, continuing to his marriage morn, and then running downwards, like an overstrained reel, under the leadership of his Bad. From turning to turning of that descent, he saw himself advised to retrieve the fatal steps, at each point attempting it just too late; until too late by an hour, he reached the seaport where his wife had embarked; and her brother, Chillon John, cruelly, it was the common opinion, refused him audience. No syllable of the place whither she fled abroad was vouchsafed to him; and his confessions of sins and repentance of them were breathed to empty air. The wealthiest nobleman of all England stood on the pier, watching the regiments of that doomed expedition mount ship, ready with the bribe of the greater part of his possessions for a single word to tell him of his wife's destination. Lord Feltre, his companion, has done us the service to make his emotions known. He describes

them, true, as the Papist who sees every incident contribute to precipitate sinners into the bosom of his Church. But this, we have warrant for saying, did not occur before the earl had visited and strolled in the woods with his former secretary, Mr. Gower Woodseer, of whom so much has been told, and he little better than an infidel, declaring his aim to be at contentedness in life. Lord Fleetwood might envy for a while, he could not be satisfied with Nature.

Within six months of Carinthia Jane's disappearance, people had begun to talk of strange doings at Calesford; and some would have it, that it was the rehearsal of a play, in which friars were prominent characters, for there the frocked gentry were seen flitting across the ground. Then the world learnt too surely that the dreaded evil had happened, its wealthiest nobleman had gone over to the Church of Rome!—carrying all his personal and unentailed estate to squander it on images and a dogma. Calesford was attacked by the mob;—one of the notorious riots in our history was a result of the Amazing Marriage, and roused the talk of it again over Great Britain. When Carinthia Jane, after two years of adventures and perils rarely encountered by women, returned to these shores, she was, they say, most anxious for news of her husband; and then, indeed, it has been conjectured, they might have been united to walk henceforward as one for life, but for the sad fact—Dr. Glossop has the dates—that the Earl of Fleetwood had two months and some days previously abjured his rank, his remaining property, his freedom and his title, to become the Brother Russett of the mountain monastery he visited in simple curiosity once with his betraying friend, Lord

Feltre. For he was never the man to stop at anything half way.

Mr. Rose Mackrell, in his Memoirs, was the first who revealed to the world, that the Mademoiselle de Levellier of the French Count fighting with the Carlists—falsely claimed by him as a Frenchwoman—was, in very truth, Carinthia Jane, the Countess of Fleetwood, to whom Carlists and Legitimists alike were indebted for tender care of them on the field and in hospital; and who rode from one camp through the other up to the tent of the Pretender to the throne of Spain, bearing her petition for her brother's release; which was granted, in acknowledgment of her 'renowned humanity to both conflicting armies,' as the words translated by Dr. Glossop run. Certain it is she brought her wounded brother safe home to England, and prisoners in that war usually had short shrift. For three years longer she was the Countess of Fleetwood, 'widow of a living suicide,' Mr. Rose Mackrell describes the state of the Marriage at that period. No whisper of divorce did she tolerate.

Six months after it was proved that Brother Russett had perished of his austerities, we learn she said to the beseeching applicant for her hand, Mr. Owain Wythan, with the gift of it, in compassion: 'Rebecca could foretell events.' Carinthia Jane had ever been ashamed of second marriages, and the union with her friend Rebecca's faithful simpleton gave it, one supposes, a natural air, for he as little as she had previously known the wedded state. She married him, Henrietta has written, because of his wooing her with dog's eyes instead of words. The once famous beauty carried a wrinkled spot on her cheek to her grave; a saving disfigurement, and the mark of changes in the story

told you enough to make us think it a providential intervention for such ends as were in view.

So much I can say: the facts related, with some regretted omissions, by which my story has so skeleton a look, are those that led to the lamentable conclusion. But the melancholy, the pathos of it, the heart of all England stirred by it, have been—and the panting excitement it was to every listener—sacrificed in the vain effort to render events as consequent to your understanding as a piece of logic, through an exposure of character! Character must ever be a mystery, only to be explained in some degree by conduct; and that is very dependent upon accident: and unless we have a perpetual whipping of the tender part of the reader's mind, interest in invisible persons must needs flag. For it is an infant we address, and the story-teller whose art excites an infant to serious attention succeeds best; with English people assuredly, I rejoice to think, though I pray their patience here while that philosophy and exposure of character block the course along a road inviting to traffic of the most animated kind.

THE END

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